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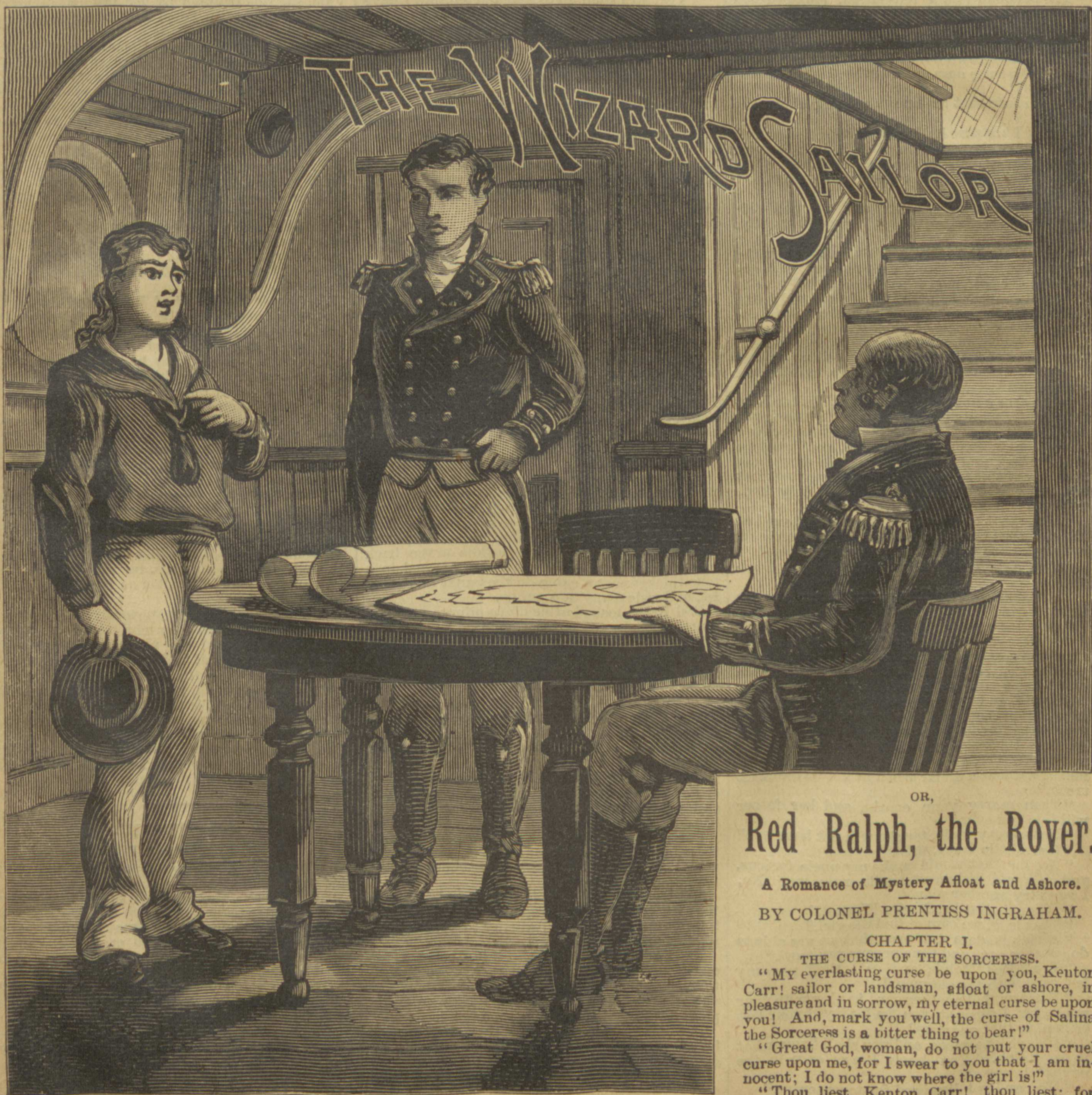
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"WHAT GUARANTEE CAN YOU GIVE, MY LAD?" "MY LIFE SHALL BE THE FORFEIT, SIR,"
WAS THE BOLD RESPONSE OF THE BOY SAILOR.

OR,

Red Ralph, the Rover.

A Romance of Mystery Afloat and Ashore.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE CURSE OF THE SORCERESS.

"My everlasting curse be upon you, Kenton Carr! sailor or landsman, afloat or ashore, in pleasure and in sorrow, my eternal curse be upon you! And, mark you well, the curse of Salina the Sorceress is a bitter thing to bear!"

"Great God, woman, do not put your cruel curse upon me, for I swear to you that I am innocent; I do not know where the girl is!"

"Thou liest, Kenton Carr! thou liest; for thou hast stolen her from me; but, woe be unto you, I say, for my curse is upon thee! Ere long

her brother will return from sea, and then thou wilt find upon thy crime-stained track one who cannot be shaken off, one who will have thy life, if my curses do not drive thee to take thine own life before his hand clutches at thy throat. Go! Kenton Carr, go! ere I strike thee dead where thou dost stand!"

The man thus addressed turned and fled from the presence of the woman. He seemed to dread her pursuit, for he fairly flew along the rugged rocks of the sea-shore, not halting until a turn in the coast shut the house of the one who had called herself Salina the Sorceress from view.

Then he halted and stood looking down upon the waters of an inlet which here broke into the coast-line of Massachusetts.

He was a young man of five-and-twenty years, elegantly dressed in the fashion of rich men of that day, wearing a profusion of jewelry and lace, and altogether a striking-looking personage, albeit his face was marred by dissipation and a stamp of recklessness.

Placing his fingers to his lips he gave a long, shrill whistle, and soon after a skiff with a single occupant moved out from a hiding-place among the rocks, and landed near where the young man had halted, and who now walked quickly down to the shore and sprang into the stern of the boat.

The oarsman was a red-haired, long-bearded man, with a face evil and almost ferocious in expression.

He was dressed in a sailor suit, wore his tarpaulin pulled down over his eyes, and said gruffly as the young man entered the skiff:

"Well?"

"I am sure that he knows nothing about the girl."

"And I am sure he does, for who else could?"

"That is the question, Red Ralph; but she put her curse upon me, and a cruel and bitter one it was, until I was glad to fly from her presence."

"She cursed you, did she?" and the man with the oars shuddered, while his face paled slightly.

"Yes."

"I'd rather have the devil's blessing than the curse of that old witch, captain; but, you are sure she did not know where the girl is?"

"I am sure, Red Ralph, for she accused me of kidnapping her; and more, she threatened me with the vengeance of that young Sea Satan, Clifford Sweegan, whom I no more believe is the brother of Kate, than I do that either of them are the children of the old hag who calls herself a sorceress."

"They may not be her children, Master Kenton, and they may not be sister and brother; but the old woman is certainly a sorceress, or a witch, for she has strange powers, and has done weird things, and I tell you again I should not rest easy with her curses dogging my wake at sea, and my footsteps ashore, and I only hope no harm will come of it to you."

"But, what is to be done, for if you have lost the girl, then the chance of getting the treasure, which you are sure she knows about, is lost."

"It is a bad business, Master Kenton, I admit."

"Bad, indeed, Red Ralph, and worse for me than for you."

"How so?"

"Well, everybody looks upon you as a bad man, and suspects that you are the ally of smugglers, perhaps of pirates, where they regard me at least as a man of honor, though naturally a trifle wild, and the latter they forgive with the expectation that I will be my uncle's heir to a very large fortune, for they do not know, as you do, that I have gambled away every dollar of my inheritance, and my old kinsman will cut me off without a dollar when he knows the exact truth."

"Then marry your cousin, and her father will tide you over."

"Not so easy to do, for she will not have me."

"Use a little force, then."

"No, for that would make my uncle furious, and he would disinherit her to ruin me. No, I must try another plan."

"What shall it be, Master Kenton?"

"That is, if we cannot find the girl."

"Which it does not seem that we are able to do, or ever can, and time presses you hard."

"True, Red Ralph, and so I shall play my last card with the old man."

"Can you find another card to play with your uncle, for I thought you had played your last trump, in that quarter?"

"I have one more, and you shall know what it is, Ralph. You know I was once in the navy?"

"Yes, and got dismissed for some scrape."

"I did; but, I had a good training the half

dozen years I was there, as an officer of an armed vessel, and my uncle was proud of having me a sailor, for you know he was a commodore in 'seventy-six."

"Yes, and a splendid officer, too, for I was a middy under him then; about 'eighty-two, I think it was—how time flies, for that was thirty years ago. I was a lad then in my teens."

Red Ralph seemed to suddenly drift back into bygone memories which changed the entire expression of his face, for his evil look vanished, his dark eyes glistened and he no longer appeared the villain he had become since his boyhood.

"Don't get moody, Ralph, for it is not becoming to you; but, let me tell you that my uncle was reading the other night of the coming war with England, and cursing his luck that his wooden leg would not let him serve, while he added, with an angry look at me:

"Now, sir, would be the chance for you to distinguish yourself, and rub the tarnish off of your name by gallant acts, if you only had the will and nerve to do it."

"My cousin told me what my uncle said, after I left the room, for I always set sail when he opens his broadsides upon me. He declared if I was worth it he would fit out a privateer for me."

"The very thing, Master Kenton!"

"Yes; so I shall go to him and tell him I have decided to fit out, at my own expense—"

"Your expense, Master Kenton!" said Red Ralph, with a sneer.

"So I will say, for he will at once tell me that he will stand the expense if I will go as captain, and we will share even."

"Yes, he will do that, I guess."

"And I can make my share return the fortune I have gambled away, and then it will put me all right with the old chap."

"And your very humble servant, Captain Kenton Carr?"

There was a world of meaning in the words and manner of the speaker.

"Oh, you shall be my—"

"What?"

"Well, boatswain."

"Thank you, no; I will go as first officer."

"But, Ralph, what would people think and say?"

"You need not let them know who your officers are until you sail; or you can keep back the name of your first luff, at least; then, when at sea, put the name of Ralph Rogers on the ship's books."

"I'll do it, for I know your worth, Ralph. But here we are at the landing, so I will hasten home, and to-morrow come and tell you what the result of my last card is to be. Good-evening."

"And the girl?"

"You must keep up your search for her, and we must hasten to get afloat in the privateer, for should she turn up and tell our story, then we would have to get away to save ourselves."

"Sure," and as Red Ralph spoke the young man threw himself into the saddle on the back of a splendid horse which had been hitched in a pine thicket near a cabin on the banks of the inlet, and rode away at a gallop.

Red Ralph looked after him a minute and then muttered as he entered the cabin:

"It won't do for you to play me false, Kenton Carr, for my revenge would be as terrible as the curse of old Salina, the Sorceress."

CHAPTER II.

CELINE CHETWYN'S DESTINY.

AROUND an old plantation-house on the coast of Carolina, strange legends hung, and those who dwelt in the vicinity never cared to cross its lands, or go near its grand mansion, left crumbling away, as its broad acres of woodlands and fields were left to become overgrown with brush and weeds.

For generations the Chetwyns had dwelt there, and the last male of his race, a proud and genial old gentleman, had but one child, a beautiful daughter, Celine.

She was her father's idol, and he held hope that when one day she would marry it would be to some noble man, well worthy to wear a gem so precious.

But Fate, cruel Fate, shaped it otherwise, for one day, when returning together in the plantation yacht from Charleston, the father and daughter beheld an armed craft glide around a point ahead and bear down upon them.

It was a coast outlaw, and that they were to be captured by a pirate they well knew, for escape seemed impossible.

The yacht was a slow sailer and was loaded down with plantation supplies, while her negro crew were almost paralyzed with fear.

At a shot from the pirate, for he boldly flaunted the black flag, the yacht hove to and all hope was given up, when, suddenly, from out of an inlet sailed another armed vessel, and the buccaneer found that he had to look to his own safety.

The cruiser was splendidly handled, however; her first broadside crippled the pirate, and after a short action the outlaw was captured and the yacht saved.

The rescuer proved to be an American serving under the infant flag of Columbia, and few handsomer men ever trod a deck than was Captain Bernard Bazil of the Columbian cruiser, Red Scorpion.

Thus did Celine Chetwyn meet her fate, for the young captain often visited Sea Vale Plantation in his cruises, and the result was that they became engaged.

But, Celine had scores of lovers who would not give her up without a struggle, and soon rumors came to the ears of the planter that his intended son-in-law was using the flag of Columbia to carry on acts of piracy.

He had been in the service of the country whose flag he floated, but had taken to piracy, and was better known as Bazil the Buccaneer.

This Celine would not believe, and one night when the schooner dropped anchor near Sea Vale, she was tempted by her fascinating lover and fled from her home and father to become his bride.

Years after, when the old planter died, he left his property to go to his daughter's children, if any, after a century had passed, thus cutting her off, and upon a brass tablet made fast upon the heavy front door, the tenor of his will was engraved, along with a demand that Sea Vale should be deserted, homestead and lands, and allowed to go to decay and weeds.

Thus several years passed. The master slumbered in the little family burying-ground overlooking the sea, while the grand house went to ruin as time passed on.

Then the neighbors were startled, one day, to see a small craft at anchor off Sea Vale, and, soon after, to learn that Celine, the buccaneer's bride, had returned with two children, a boy and a girl.

The people had heard of Bazil and his crew, some time before, for the pirate had boarded a brig one night, expecting to find a prize, and had been entrapped by a cruiser.

A storm sweeping down had parted the vessels, leaving the pirate chief's wife and children, and a dozen men only, on board, and those on the brig had been captured.

But it was said that Bazil had made his escape, when the cruiser had reached his first port, and what had become of his vessel, driven away from the brig and lost to sight in the storm, no one knew.

When, therefore, it was said that Celine had returned to her old home, accompanied by her son and daughter, the place was more shunned than ever, and when a handsome, manly-looking youth was wont to sail around to Wilmington and purchase supplies, he was looked upon with curiosity and suspicion as the son of Bazil the Buccaneer.

And one night, as mysteriously as they had come, the mother and her children sailed away from Sea Vale, and the plantation home and lands were again left to desolation and decay.

For over a year the strange trio had dwelt there, avoided by all, yet seeking no associations with any one, and then they had as silently and mysteriously departed as they had come, going no one knew whither.

So it was that Sea Vale was left to its gloom once more and more dreaded it became than ever, for a curse seemed upon it.

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERIOUS VISIT.

"YOU seem to know the channel well into this bay, captain."

"Yes, I have run through this inlet into the sheet of water before us, which is known as the sound, many times, Costa—many times," and the speaker turned away and crossed the deck as though the scene called up memories of a painful nature.

The two stood upon the deck of an armed schooner, and a craft which had the look not often seen in honest cruisers or merchantmen.

She was too rakish-looking to inspire confidence, and a glance at her red-capped crew but carried out this suspicion.

She carried a large crew, a heavy battery, and her tall masts and long bowsprit showed that she could spread a vast quantity of sail,

though then she was only under working canvas.

It was night, and she was working in through an inlet which led into a sheet of water on the coast of Carolina, and as the homes of rich planters were known to line the coast, it appeared to be evident that her mysterious visit by night was a lawless one.

Returning to the side of the officer whom he had called Costa, the captain continued:

"Costa, let me tell you why I have come here."

"If you deem it right, sir, to bestow your confidence upon me, I will be glad to have it," responded the officer, whose dark face and general appearance indicated the Cuban, though he spoke English with but little accent.

"Yes, I prefer to, for, but for you, I would not now be upon this deck, ready again to flaunt the black flag."

"The night I saved you in Havana, from an assassin's knife, I saw there was much in you to admire, and when I knew that you were upon your last dollar, and desperate, I told you how, as your forgeries would soon be known, to go still deeper, and get enough money to purchase this craft, which I knew of, and turn her into a sea free lance."

"You yielded to the temptation, and we are afloat upon a splendid craft."

"My promise to you to give you funds, if I could find a certain person, is why I came here to-night, and if I secure the money I will give you enough to return to Cuba and clear your name of all dishonor before those papers become due."

"If not, why then, Costa, you are in for becoming a real pirate."

"I understand the situation perfectly, Captain Basil, and abide it."

"It is best; but to my story:

"I am an American, and getting into a financial scrape such as you have, I fled to Columbia and offered my sword to the Government."

"I was made a captain and given a fine cruiser; but I preferred to hoist the black flag, and to turn pirate."

"Off this coast I saved from capture one day a gentleman and his daughter, and I soon loved the latter devotedly."

"But that I was a pirate soon leaked out, and so I urged her to fly with me and become my bride."

"She did so, and a priest I had captured some time before married us."

"No children were born to us, but one day, when I visited my wife, who when not cruising with me dwelt on the coast of Cuba, she told me of a vessel wrecked on the coast, and she had saved a boy and baby girl, along with papers stating who they were."

"I at once saw that there was gold to be made through the children, and so urged my wife to adopt them, and from that day they became as our own."

"They went to sea with me, and the lad, a splendid little fellow, I made a junior officer, and he at once became known as the Buccaneer Midshipman."

"As my wife refused to countenance certain plans I had formed for the children, I decided to get rid of her, for mine is a fickle nature, Costa; but, ere I could do so, we sighted a brig, which I deemed a valuable prize, and gave chase."

"Before overhauling her we were caught in a storm, and in an interview I had with my wife, I told her that our marriage was a bogus one, that one of my crew had played the part of priest."

"A cruel thing to tell a woman, captain."

"Yes; it caused her to swoon away. I left her on the cabin floor and never have seen her since, for I boarded the brig, found her to be a cruiser, and, as a storm tore our vessels apart, I was captured, with all but two dozen men I had left on the schooner."

"I made my escape, and always believed that the schooner had gone down with all on board."

"But, another of my men also escaped, and is now on this schooner, for I met him in Havana, and he tells me that he saw my wife and the two children, coming along the coast northward, stopping at different ports. He meant to join them, but they left port and he could not find them."

"Now, on my schooner was a large treasure, which I believe my wife has. Yonder white-walled mansion is her home, so she has returned here, I am certain."

"That is why I have come here to-night. If I regain the treasure you shall have all that I promised you. The boy I shall take with me, and the girl can remain with my wife, and one

day there will be another fortune in my pocket, for my wife has the papers to prove just who they are."

"I will anchor here and go ashore. You must be ready with a boat's crew to come to my aid, if you hear my signal."

"Ay ay, captain, and Heaven grant you get the treasure. I can then return to Cuba, say I was captured by pirates, take up that forged paper and all will be well with me."

"I hope so, Costa; but now to see if all be well with me."

Basil, the Buccaneer, entered his gig, and, taking the oars, rowed himself ashore.

He cautiously approached the mansion, by the weed-grown gravel walk, and ascended the creaking stairs, when his eyes fell upon the brass tablet on the oaken door.

The moonlight revealed the words engraven there distinctly, and he read them with a muttered curse.

"The planter is dead, and has left this tablet to tell how he cut his daughter off. The place is a ruin, and she would not dare come here—no, not with that tablet staring her in the face."

"I must look elsewhere for her, and those children, for I will find them."

"Yes, I will yet have my treasure, which I know she has. What else could have become of it?"

"Curse this old place! It seems to haunt me with my evil deeds, and I will away."

With this he turned and walked back toward the shore, little dreaming that the one he so anxiously sought stood within the window, only a few feet from him, and knew him as he stood there in the bright moonlight, yet scarcely dared breathe.

Away sailed the pirate craft from the Sound, and soon after the buccaneer's wife and children fled the scene, for the woman dared not remain there, for fear he would come again.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRIO OF SEA GYPSIES.

"MOTHER, I do not like our harborage for the night, but then we had to run in to escape the storm. I will take the skiff and row up the lagoon, for I feel sure, from all signs, that there is a buccaneer's haunt above us."

"What makes you think so, my son?"

"Well, I noticed in several places as we poled in, that branches were broken off the trees in narrow parts of the lagoon, and here and there were rope ends, which had been cut. So, it will be best to take a look about me."

The speaker stepped into a little skiff and rowed silently away from a small craft of sloop rig, which lay at anchor in a lagoon, and at a spot where she was completely hidden from any one passing near in the open waters.

The craft was an odd one, fitted up as a sea home for its three occupants, the handsome lad of fourteen who had rowed away, the one whom he had addressed as mother, and whose beauty was weird-like and her costume picturesque, almost wild.

The third was a lovely little girl, several years the junior of the lad, and who was also attired in a picturesque costume which but added to her beauty, for she was very beautiful.

"Does brother Clifford fear danger, mother?" she asked, as she came out of the cabin and joined the woman upon the deck.

"Yes, and he has gone to see if there is anything to fear, my child," was the answer, and the two set to work to prepare supper by the time the lad returned.

An hour passed, and then his skiff was seen coming rapidly into the little hiding-place of the strange craft.

"Mother, we are in a hornets' nest; and, that is not all," said the lad, as he stepped on deck.

"What have you discovered, Clifford?" eagerly asked the woman.

"Just this: that there is a pirate camp, a mile above here, and several vessels are anchored along the lagoon banks."

"I fortunately heard voices, and hid inshore, and, soon after, a boat came up the lagoon with two men in it, and at the same time a boat came down from the camps with a dozen men in her."

"The officer in the stern called out angrily to the two men in the pirogue, that he was going to see what had become of them, and one replied that they could not return sooner."

"Well, what have you discovered?" asked the officer.

"The vessel is an American brig-of-war, sir, and she seems short of crew, for from the tree I climbed to the top of I could only count fifty-five men," answered the man. "And we can raise over a hundred, and can gain by a surprise, too."

"I was in hopes that the craft reported was a merchantman; but we need a good vessel so she will be a prize for us."

"She has doubtless come in to escape the storm, and little dreams that we have our haunt here."

"But, did you see anything of the little sloop that was sighted coming up the coast?"

"No, sir, and she doubtless went on up the coast to seek shelter in another harborage."

"We must find her to-morrow, for she doubtless belongs to some plantation."

"That means our craft, Clifford?"

"Yes, mother; but I heard the officer then plan to go down in boats and attack the cruiser to-night just before dawn, and so I will go, when it is dark, and warn the American captain."

"I agree with you, Clifford, and then we can get out of this."

"Not to-night, mother, for it is blowing hard outside, and with the cruiser's men on the watch we have nothing to fear," was the answer, and the youth sat down to the very tempting supper which his mother had prepared for him.

By the time that the meal was finished darkness had come on, and after muffling his oars well, and arming himself with a musket, a brace of double-barrel pistols and a cutlass, the young sailor started upon his mission to warn the cruiser's captain of danger.

So silently had he approached the vessel that he slipped over the side and stood by the side of the officer of the deck before a soul on board was aware of his presence.

"Sh! Sir, I have come on board to warn you of danger," he said to the startled officer.

"Who are you?" was the low, stern reply.

"A Sea Gypsy, sir; but I wish to see the captain."

"How did you get on board?"

"My oars are muffled, sir, and I did not wish to hail, for the vessel may now be watched."

"Come with me into the cabin."

The lad followed and there found a fine looking man in the uniform of a captain in the United States Navy, seated at a round table examining some charts.

He heard what the lieutenant had to say, and then, fixing his keen eyes upon the handsome face of the lad, looked both interested and curious.

The boy was dressed in a blue sailor suit, with a white broad collar to the shirt, in each corner of which was a gold anchor.

The cuffs were also white and had gold anchors upon them, while about his waist was a white sash loosely knotted and holding his cutlass and pistols.

Upon his head jauntily sat a scarlet tarpaulin, and in his black silk scarf a ruby star shone brightly, and added to his striking appearance.

The face was bold, frank, handsome and intelligent beyond his years, while dark curls fell upon his sailor collar.

"Well, sir, what have you got to say for yourself, boarding an American vessel-of-war in this fashion, my lad?" asked the captain.

"I boarded her to say, sir, that, two miles above, on the banks of the lagoon, is a pirate retreat, with over a hundred men in it."

"In the lagoon are anchored several vessels, one a schooner of sixty tons and armed, while there are two small sloops, with a couple of guns each."

"It is the retreat of the Reef Rovers, which I have searched for in vain for a year. Who are you, my lad?"

"A Sea Gypsy, sir."

"Ah! and what may that mean?"

"Well, sir, my mother, my little sister and myself, cruise at our will in a little sloop, and we put in here to escape the storm. I saw signs that caused me to suspect vessels had been carried up the lagoon, so I went to find out and discovered the pirate camp, and hiding, overheard a plot to attack you to-night in boats, just before dawn, and take your vessel."

"The spy they sent said that he had counted fifty-five men only on your decks, and the chief declared that he could carry you easily, as he could come down under muffled oars and bring over double your force, while the surprise would help him greatly."

"By Neptune, but you tell a strange story, my lad. You say you overheard this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where were you?"

"In my boat hiding alongshore. The spy's boat and the chief's met within thirty feet of me."

"And you are a Sea Gypsy, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"And came to warn me?"

"Yes, sir, and if you will permit me to make a suggestion I think I can show you how you can capture the pirates."

"A suggestion from a boy, Colston," said the captain with a smile to his lieutenant.

"Yes, sir, but I have no faith in the boy, Captain Chadwick," replied the lieutenant.

The lad turned upon him with flashing eyes, and said with a ring of anger:

"Then, sir, it is well for this crew and this vessel that you are not in command, else many would regret that you had not heeded the warning of a boy ere a few hours have gone by."

"Ha! ha! ha! He has you there, Colston; but, my lad, I wish to hear your suggestion as to how I can capture those Reef Rovers."

"I can pilot your boats up to the camps, sir, at midnight, to attack them, and thus catch them in their own trap."

"Well said, my brave boy!"

"Captain Chadwick, the boy wishes to lead us into a trap, for I believe he belongs to the pirate band, and, afraid to attack us on the cruiser, they wish to get us away in our boats to fall an easy prey to them."

"My dear Colston, under ordinary circumstances I would agree with you; but just now I do not, when I look into this lad's manly face. I shall trust him."

"I thank you, sir! and, as you do, I will offer you a guarantee of good faith."

"What guarantee can you give, my lad?"

"My life shall be the forfeit, sir," was the bold response of the boy sailor.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRAP SPRUNG.

"BRAVELY said, my fine boy, for no man could do more than to offer his life as proof of good faith."

"Are you satisfied now, Colston?" and the captain turned to the still doubting lieutenant, who replied:

"I cannot see how he can offer his life as a guarantee."

"I will pilot the boats, sir, and the officer who sits next to me can hold a pistol against my heart, so as to kill me if I lead you into a trap. And more, I will take you now to where my own little sloop is anchored, with my mother and sister on board."

"There, what have you to say now, Colston?"

"It could all be arranged about the sloop, sir, and a woman and girl on board."

"I believe in being on watch against attack and thus beat the pirate crew off."

"And I shall do as this lad urges, go in the boats and attack the pirates," sternly said Captain Chadwick.

"I am sorry that is your decision, sir."

"It is, and you, Colston, remain in command of the vessel, with thirty men, while I take sixty to the attack, for my lad, my crew numbers something over ninety men."

"You go with me in the leading boat, and though I trust you, I will say that *should* you prove false, I will kill you then and there, while when you show that you have told us true, and I believe you have, I will send your name in for a midshipman's berth in the United States Navy, for we need just such material as I judge you to be made of."

"Now, when do you wish to start?"

"The storm, sir, will aid you, for the wind among the trees drowns all noise we may make, and the pirates will doubtless retire early, as they expect to be up before dawn to attack you."

"Then, I shall order the boats ready, the men doubly armed and the oars all muffled."

"Yes, sir, and a small gun in the bow of each boat to open fire with first on the camp, would be a surprise and do greater damage."

"Do you hear that, Colston?"

"Just think of it from one so young."

"My boy, you are a born sailor and fighter."

"What is your name?"

"Clifford Sweegan, sir."

"All right, Master Sweegan, we will be off within the hour."

Lieutenant Colston shook his head doubtfully, yet dared not say more, and left to obey the orders given him by his commander.

Within the hour five boats left the cruiser's side filled with armed men, and those left on board were all on watch against surprise.

In the leading boat was the captain and the young pilot, the latter holding the tiller, while his skiff towed behind.

The wind was blowing a gale outside, and the sea thundered heavily upon the beach, sending mountain waves for up into the secluded lagoon.

But the swaying trees rustling wildly, and the wash of the waters were in the favor of the attacking party.

"My sloop lies in there, sir, not a hundred feet away," said the lad.

And he added:

"Do you wish to go aboard, sir, and see if my mother does not vouch for me?"

"No, my lad, for I trust any boy who is willing to leave his mother to vouch for his good name."

"Keep on!"

The boats continued on up the stream, and after a slow row of half an hour, came in sight of a light, and then another.

"It is from their camp-fires, sir, and their vessels lie right ahead of us inshore."

"When near, if not discovered, we can form in line and open fire with the boat howitzers and then land; but it would be well to send a couple of boats to seize the schooner and sloops, for if there are no crews on board your men can then come on as a reserve and support you."

"Boy, you are a marvel, and by Neptune you are the one who will gain this fight, not I, for your plans are to be carried out," and as the boats came alongside the captain's cutter he gave his orders to his different officers.

Nearer and nearer the boats approached, now in line and then oar-lengths apart, and still no sign of life came from the pirate retreat.

All seemed to be lost in deep slumber, and the howling wind and rustling leaves deadened every sound made by the cruiser's men in their approach.

Then the boats rested on their oars, the men grasped their arms, ready to land, and all eyes were turned upon the huts of the pirates, not two hundred feet away.

"Ready at your howitzers?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Aim at the huts, and steady!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered the gunners, in low tones.

"Fire!"

With the command the five boat howitzers, in the bow of each boat, poured in an iron hail upon the pirate retreat ashore, their red flashes illumining the dark lagoon and the moss-hung trees upon the banks.

Ere the roar had died away three of the boats landed their crews, while the fourth and fifth ran alongside of the pirate vessels lying near.

With wild cheers the American tars dashed into the midst of the terrified pirates, and the rattle of musketry and pistols made lively music.

The buccaneers were so completely surprised that they were dazed, and, half dressed and terrified they ran from their cabins to be shot down by the boat's crews.

Some rallied under the command of their officers, but not for long, and then they dashed away into the gloom of the forest in the rear and the retreat was taken, half a hundred men lay dead or wounded among the camps, the vessels were in the possession of the victors and vast quantities of piratical booty was found.

Skirmishers were sent to drive the coast outlaws still further into the dense forest, and several of the cabins were set on fire to light up the scene.

"Where is my gallant boy here?" called out Captain Chadwick when the fight had ended.

"I last saw him cut down this pirate officer at my feet; but have not seen him since."

Search was made at once, but the brave lad was not to be found.

He was either dead, or had mysteriously disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNFORGOTTEN FACE.

THE mother and sister of Clifford Sweegan grew very anxious as he failed to return at midnight, and they sat on deck listening and watching for his return.

Suddenly the woods around them fairly shook under the terrific roar of the five howitzers, and the mother and daughter dropped upon their knees and uttered prayers for the safety of the brave boy whose life was exposed to the carnage they knew was being waged up the lagoon.

"He has led the cruiser's crew to attack the pirates, Kate," said the woman.

"Yes, mother, it is just like brother," was the reply.

And so they waited until the firing ceased and the howling winds were again heard.

Their suspense was growing terrible, when suddenly the skiff shot alongside and Clifford

sprung on deck and was welcomed by his mother and sister.

"The captain and his men took the camp, mother, and the slaughter of the pirates was terrible; but I slipped away because I did not wish to be thanked, so, as the wind is going down and has chopped round off-shore now, let us move out and go on our way."

"As you wish, my son," was the reply.

"I will tow out with my skiff ahead, and Kate can steer the sloop, but we must be very quiet, for the cruiser lies below and I wish to slip by her without being seen."

The sloop soon after, with Clifford in the skiff ahead, drew out of the basin into the main lagoon and slowly went down-stream.

As the lagoon widened into a little bay, near the mouth, the cruiser was dimly seen at anchor near the middle, so that Clifford held on close inshore, thus hoping to elude the vigilant eyes on board.

This he would doubtless have done, had not Lieutenant Colston, not hearing from his captain, decided to turn a blue light to brighten up the dark shore around his anchorage, and send up a rocket as a signal he hoped would be answered, for he still feared that the lad had led the trusting captain into a trap.

The blue light at once revealed the little sloop slipping along the shores of the lagoon bay, and loud rose a chorus of voices in alarm.

"I see her," and raising his voice Lieutenant Colston called out:

"Ahoy, that sloop!"

"Ahoy, the cruiser!" Clifford answered.

"Come alongside of me, or I will fire a broadside into you!"

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the lad, and to his mother he said:

"It's no use, mother, we are seen, and that lieutenant would blow us out of the water."

So he headed for the cruiser, and as he boarded and was recognized by Lieutenant Colston, the latter said:

"Ah! it is you, is it, and trying to escape, after having led Captain Chadwick and his men into a trap."

"Put him in irons, and put a guard on his vessel."

"There are two women aboard, sir," reported a seaman.

"Send them into the cabin aboard the cruiser until I discover what this young villain has been up to."

Then turning to Clifford he continued:

"Now, sir, how do you like the feel of these irons upon your wrists and ankles?"

"They are by no means pleasant, sir," was the cool reply.

"Well, a rope about your neck will be less so; but now, what have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing."

"What?"

"I have nothing to say for myself, sir."

"Where were you going when the blue-light revealed you?"

"Out to sea, sir."

"Trying to escape?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Captain Chadwick, where is he?"

"I left him in the pirate camp, sir."

"By Jupiter, boy, you are a cool one; but you will suffer for this."

"For what, sir?"

"For leading Captain Chadwick and his men into a trap."

"Lieutenant, I have not done so, and you are all wrong, as you will see when Captain Chadwick returns."

"Boat ahoy!" shouted the lookout, and the answer came:

"Ahoy the Bee! it is I, Colston."

A moment after Captain Chadwick stepped on deck, and as the battle-lanterns revealed the lad in irons he said, with marked anger:

"Mr. Colston, you have overstepped your duty, sir, for what does this mean?"

"He was trying to tow his sloop out to sea, sir, with muffled oars, and I ordered him alongside and put him in irons, while his mother and sister are in your cabin."

"You are all wrong, sir, and over-zealous in your hatred of this lad. Come into my cabin, sir, with the lad, as soon as you have taken the irons off of him."

The officer was much crestfallen and hastened to obey, and the captain, having stopped to give a few orders, the three entered the cabin together.

Captain Chadwick was more interested than ever in the youth when he beheld his mother and sister.

He gazed with a strange look into the face of the woman, whose face changed color, and she

quickly drew a Spanish veil, she wore fastened to a diamond-studded comb in her hair, across her face.

"Pardon, my dear madam, but I am sure that we have met before, for your face comes back to me like a dream of the past," and the captain seemed deeply moved.

"No, sir, we are strangers, but I would like to know by what authority you bring my boat to, throw my son in irons, and hold my daughter and myself prisoners on board your vessel."

"It is through a blunder of my lieutenant, madam, for I owe to your brave son far more than words can repay."

"He led me to the pirate retreat, and through him we captured it, and I last saw him by my side when he killed the outlaw chief with his cutlass."

"Then I missed him, and returning to my vessel, I found him here in irons."

"Why, my noble young friend, did you desert me, though to your credit be it said, it was after the fight had ended."

The lad made no reply, and the woman said:

"He returned, sir, to his boat, and said that as the wind had lulled somewhat, and had chopped round off-shore, he wished to go to sea to avoid being thanked for what he had done, or insulted by an offer of pecuniary aid, which, permit me to say, he does not need."

"With his skiff out ahead, he was towing out, when he was seen and ordered alongside."

"Now, sir, may we go upon our way?"

"Still more of a mystery," mused Captain Chadwick, while he said aloud:

"You are as modest as you are brave, my lad; but you surely will accept your share of the rich prize we have taken through you, for it will be an officer's portion?"

"No, sir, I thank you; I have no need for money, and you can divide it among the crew."

"Well said, indeed; but let me offer you another reward in the shape of a letter to the President, asking for a midshipman's berth for you in the navy, and that you report aboard my ship for duty?"

The lad glanced toward his mother, who said to him in Spanish:

"Accept the letter, my son, to be presented at will to the President."

"I will accept the letter, sir, and thank you for your kindness."

"I will write it at once, unless you will all be my guests for the night."

"No, thank you, Captain Chadwick, but we prefer to go at once upon our way," said the woman, and her words caused the captain to turn quickly toward her and say, excitedly:

"That proves that we have met before, for you called me by name."

"I was right in my surmise."

"You were wrong, sir, for I but just now heard my son call you by name," was the cold reply of the woman.

Captain Chadwick seemed disappointed, but made no reply, and seating himself at his table, wrote a letter of several pages.

Then he said:

"Lieutenant Colston, I desire you to indorse this letter, along with every other officer now on board this vessel, the warrant officers as well."

"I will be glad to do so, sir, to atone in a measure for my rudeness and doubt of this lad's good faith, and I ask his pardon for it," was the frank response of Lieutenant Colston.

He then signed the letter, and the officers were called in, and upon hearing it read, also gladly signed it.

"Now, my gallant boy sailor, I beg to present you with this very elegant sword I took from the pirate chief whom you killed, and who was none other than Brand, the Reef Rover, whom the Government has been most anxious to capture for years. So you see the value of your services."

"This letter I beg you to present in person to the President, and when you get your berth, ask to be ordered to my vessel."

"As you will not accept my hospitality, you are again your own master," and Captain Chadwick gazed once more at the veiled face of the woman.

But, she bowed and at once left the cabin, her hand clasping that of her daughter, while the lad followed, after a warm shake of the hand from the captain.

When the sloop, now under easy sail, cast off, the crew gave three cheers for the brave boy, while Captain Chadwick said sadly to himself:

"My God! can it be Celine Chetwyn, whom I so madly loved, and who would have been my wife had she not been fascinated by that outlaw fiend, Basil?"

"No, it is only a fancied likeness, and I am wrong; but who are they? What are they?"

"Sea Gypsies, the boy said," and the captain sighed at the memories of the past crowding upon him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOME OF THE SEA GYPSIES.

SOME months before the scene that opens this story, a woman stood upon the cliff that overlooked the harbor of M— on the Massachusetts Coast, and also commanded a view of the little seaport town of M—, a couple of miles away.

An inlet flowed inland around the cliff, running back for a mile or more, and upon the opposite point, among a thick grove of pines, stood the cabin of Red Ralph, who had rowed Kenton Carr across to the home of the sorceress.

The woman who stood upon the cliff, gazing out over the harbor upon the far stretching sea, has not changed much in the years that have passed since that night of the attack of the cruiser on the pirates' camp in the Florida lagoon, and one who beheld her then would easily recognize the one whose face so moved Captain Chadwick as a memory of the past.

As she stands there now upon the cliff, unmindful of the height, for a misstep would dash her fifty feet below into the sea, she presents a weird, almost wild appearance.

Her costume is of black velvet, trimmed with silver lace embroidery in various designs, a skull and crossbones being upon her heart.

A red scarf encircles her waist, and a scarlet turban is upon her head, adding to her picturesque appearance.

In her sash is a jeweled dagger, and she looks the one to use it if need be for it.

Her hair is tinged with silver, and yet her face is still beautiful, her form still the perfection of grace.

About her neck, upon her wrists and fingers, rare jewels glimmer, a fortune in fact in gems met the eye.

Behind her a few rods stands her home, a large and comfortable cabin, and it is furnished with almost luxury.

And this strange woman, who, with her two children came to that lone home a year before, is known as "Salina the Sorceress," and the "Witch of Overlook Cliff."

One pleasant evening a pretty and unknown craft, trim as a yacht, had sailed into M— Harbor and dropped anchor.

A handsome, dashing youth, clad in a fancy sailor costume, had gone ashore and had purchased the cabin on the cliff, then known as the Haunted Hut of Overlook, for its former occupants had been mysteriously murdered there and were buried beneath the very shadow of their home.

Since then no one had dared go near the place of ill-omen, and it was said to be haunted.

Skippers would not anchor off the cliff, and Red Ralph alone had the courage to pass it in his going and coming to and fro upon the harbor.

But those strangers in the unknown sloop, mother son and daughter, had dared make their home there.

And they kept aloof from the townspeople, paying liberally for all they got, and soon became dreaded and looked upon with suspicion, while the woman was regarded as a witch, an idea she seemed, for some reason known to herself, to wish to encourage.

Now as she stood there and turned her gaze from the sea, she beheld a pretty craft flying up the harbor.

"There they come now, and sorrow only can come to the poor boy, I fear, from his visits to that girl, for her old father will never listen to his wooing his daughter."

"But grand as your home is, old commodore, the boy is entitled to a grander one did you and he but know it," and she held her hand out as though pointing to a lordly stone mansion on a hill below the town, and from the pier of which the little vessel had just started.

Up past the town swept the pretty sloop, fairly flying along over the waters, and regarded ominously by the seamen on shore and on the decks of the various crafts at anchor in the harbor.

On past the last vessel at anchor up toward the Overlook Cliff, and then heading for the inlet the sloop came.

Upon her deck were but two persons, a young man and a young girl.

The former was at the tiller, and the latter sat near him.

In the time that had gone by since that night

in the Florida lagoon, Clifford Sweegan had grown from boyhood to manhood.

His physique was superb, and his face daring, intelligent, fearless, was one never to forget when once seen, so full of beauty it was and fascination.

His costume however was still as picturesque as in his boyhood, for he seemed to cling to the fanciful in dress, and he looked more like a masquerader than a man meant for work.

His sister was on the verge of beautiful womanhood, and face and form were in perfect unison.

Her costume was sailor-like, yet like her brothers fanciful to a degree, and wearing as she did a red Turkish fez cap with gold tassel and diamond anchor stuck in it, she appeared also like a masquerader.

As the sloop neared the cliff the two on her deck waved their hands to the woman on the cliff, and then around into the inlet swept the craft, the girl took the tiller and the young sailor sprung to the sails which came down with a run.

Soon the anchor was let fall, sails were furled, and springing into a little skiff which had been in tow, the two rowed shoreward and ascended to the cabin where the woman was now seated under the shelter that protected the front.

Each kissed her affectionately, and then took seats near her.

"You look troubled, my son; has aught gone wrong with you?" asked the woman gently, for her quick eye had noticed the clouded brow of the young sailor.

Almost vehemently came the words:

"Yes, mother, this life I am leading is wrong, all wrong, and I see it now in its true light."

Then springing to his feet he began pacing to and fro, while the woman muttered almost inaudibly:

"At last! I feared it, I have feared it, oh! so much!"

CHAPTER VIII.

LOOKING BACKWARD.

THE woman seemed deeply moved, at the sudden and vehement manner of her son, who was always so very calm and dignified under the most trying circumstances.

The beautiful Kate also seemed worried and glanced anxiously at her brother.

"My son, tell me what the trouble is?" at last said the woman.

Instantly his manner changed, and seating himself beside her, he said in a low, earnest tone:

"Mother, I wish to talk to you."

"Well, my son?"

"You will hear me in patience, will you not, for never have I given you cause for one cross word to me."

"You have been most dutiful, and not once have I ever had cause to reprove you, Clifford, and what other mother can say this?"

"Then hear, my mother, all that I have to say, and if I am wrong then forgive me, only I feel that I am right."

"I am listening, my son."

"To begin, mother, let us look backward."

"Why unbury the past, Clifford?"

"I will not say aught to pain you, mother. I will recall that you left your home for the love of one, my father and Kate's, who was unworthy of you, for he was a pirate. He was captured that night when he expected to capture a merchant brig, and we long believed that he had been hanged. I know now that he is living."

"Living! Basil living!" and the woman feigned surprise.

"Yes, for he is to-day Basil the Buccaneer, and he is dreaded now as in the past. But, mother, while he was left upon the American brig with his boarders, our schooner with a handful of men drove on before the storm. They, having broken into the liquor store-room, became mad and sought to take our lives, yours and mine. I overheard their plot and we shut them up in the hold and made our escape, reaching an island in safety."

"I know all this, my son, so why recall it?"

"Simply to look backward, mother, to further a purpose I have in view. By a strange fatality, two nights after we landed on the island, the schooner drove ashore and every man left on board was lost. We went to the wreck the next day and rescued the treasure, burying it upon the island, and were enabled to strengthen our little craft we left the schooner in, and fit it out so that we could take a long voyage. You brought with you from the schooner a fortune in gems, but the main treasure lies on that island. We went from port to port and then to your old

home, which you suddenly left, after a year's sojourn there, yet why I never knew."

"Shall I tell you, Clifford, tell you and Kate?" suddenly asked the woman.

"Yes, mother."

"I left because, one moonlight night, I saw an armed schooner drop anchor in the Sound, and a man landed and came alone to the mansion's steps. He came to seek me, for that man was Basil the Buccaneer, and he, too, had come to find the treasure by finding me, for some one knew evidently that we were not lost."

"He saw naught but desertion there, read the brass tablet and went away."

"But, fearing he would return I left the place and once more became a wanderer."

"Yes, mother, and we wandered from place to place, veritable Sea Gypsies, until at last we found this home."

"Fortunately an educated woman, you have taught Kate and I, and taught us well, so that we know much of the world and of mankind."

"We came here and I have been content, as also has been Kate; but we have both been pained to see that you played upon the superstitious fears of the people, told fortunes, made prophecies and did all in your power to be looked upon as a weird woman, in other words as a sorceress."

"And I have made men and women fear me, and in my bitterness I have been revengeful against the whole world, all except you, Clifford, you and Kate," and the woman spoke bitterly.

"Be patient, mother, and hear me, for I have more to say, and I utter no word of censure and have not done so."

"We have lived here, and no one molests us, while many fear you."

"It was my good fortune to save from death, you remember, the daughter of Commodore Carr of Harborage Hall yonder, and her cousin, Kenton Carr."

"It is my belief that the day his boat capsized that day here near the cliff, he, Kenton Carr, upset it."

"Hah! you believe this?"

"Yes, mother, as also does Kate."

"We were watching the boat, and saw it go over, and he allowed his cousin to be swept off before he allowed the boat to go fully over."

"I sprung from the cliff, you remember, and Kate came out in the skiff, so we saved Miss Carr and her cousin too, for he had nearly given up when we reached him."

"Now he gave us an excuse that his feet were tangled in the sheet rope, so he could not swim to her aid; but he had tied them himself, expecting no trouble in clinging to the boat."

"His coward fear caused him to lose his nerve, and so he too nearly drowned."

"That is my idea, for he was most insulting to me, as Kate knows, when I rescued them."

"But what motive has he?"

"His uncle is his guardian, and the commodore is very rich."

"If she dies then the young man gets the fortune, for the commodore would not live long after his daughter's death."

"This is my idea."

"And mine," said Kate, firmly.

"Kenton Carr is also a very fast man, and is doubtless in debt and driven to the wall."

"He has been refused by his cousin, so is doubtless revengeful against her."

"You are not often wrong, my son."

"Then, mother, he is very bitter in his hatred of me and often has said things to cause me to resent them, so as to quarrel with me for some reason of his own I cannot quite fathom."

"He cannot know how dangerous his quarrel might prove to him, Clifford."

"He is not a coward, I am sure, but I do believe him to be a villain."

"Now, mother, we have looked backward, and let me tell you, that as we now live we have no aim in life, I have no hope of more than I now am, unless I throw off this galling yoke and become a different man."

"What would you do, my son?" and the woman's voice sunk almost to a whisper.

"Hope, struggle, have ambition—in truth, my mother, look forward, not backward," was the stern and ringing response.

CHAPTER IX.

LOOKING FORWARD.

THE ringing words of her son fairly startled the woman who had been glad to be called Salina, the Sorceress, and who rejoiced in having men and women fear her.

She knew that love alone had changed the current of Clifford's thoughts.

He had been happy in his wandering life of a Sea Gypsy, or had seemed so at least, until he

had met the commodore's daughter, saved her from death that day under the cliff.

The old commodore had called with his daughter, driven in his carriage to the cabin of the sorceress and expressed his thanks, urging that he could in some way prove his appreciation of the deed.

Since then Miss Carr had ridden on horseback alone several times, to visit Kate, and the visits had been returned by Clifford sailing his sister to Harborage Hall in his sloop, and twice had the commodore gone with them in a run out of the harbor and greatly admired the splendid seamanship of the young sailor, and also his beautiful sister.

The mother knew that this had ended in her son's loving the lovely heiress to Harborage Hall, and this had awakened his ambition to be more than he was.

After a long pause the sorceress asked:

"Have you more to tell me, my son?"

"Yes, mother, I wish to say more to you, and you will be patient with me, I know."

"Yes, Clifford."

"First, let me tell you that the man who dwells on yonder point, among the pines, and who is known as Red Ralph, the Fisherman, but is suspected of being in league with smugglers, was once an officer upon Basil's schooner, when I was known as the Buccaneer Midshipman."

The woman sprung to her feet in alarm, but Kate showed no anxiety, for she was doubtless already wholly in her brother's confidence.

"He knows us? Then he must die."

"Be calm, my mother, for you forget that when I went to Washington some years ago, to get my berth as a midshipman from the President, I told him in confidence our story and received his full pardon for all past offenses, and we have done no wrong since, nor were we really guilty before."

"So Red Ralph can do us no harm."

"But how know you that he is aware of the fact that I am Basil the Buccaneer's wife?"

"I have noticed that he is very intimate with Kenton Carr, and, in fact, I could hang them both did I wish, for I have been watching their movements and they are nothing more than smugglers."

"Of course, all I say, mother, is in confidence, to be used only in case of necessity."

"Well, after an interview with Carr, the day after my rescue of Miss Carr, Red Ralph boarded my sloop for a talk."

"He at last came to the point and told me that he was Ralph Rogers on Basil's schooner, had been captured with him and pretending to be forced into piracy as a captive, had been thus enabled to aid the chief's escape."

"I remember him."

"Yes, mother, and he recalled me as the Buccaneer Middy, and very coolly demanded hush money, or he would have us arrested."

"And your answer?"

"I laughed at him, showed him the pardon which the President had given me, and my warrant as a midshipman in the navy, appointed for services rendered, and at liberty to report at will for duty."

"He was amazed and disappointed, so took his leave, while I told him if I heard a hint of our secret being known, that, as an officer of the navy, I would arrest him as a pirate, and have him hanged."

"Clifford, I am proud of you."

"Thank you, mother; but I deemed it best to keep our secret, for it would only cast a stain upon us, in spite of the pardon we hold."

"Now, mother, what I would say is just this: That there is a war threatening, that we are on the eve of a war with England, you know."

"Ere long it must come, my son."

"Yes, mother, and I desire to win a name in it, to earn fame and riches."

"I have a fortune in gems, my son."

"Yes, mother, and every one of them dyed with the life-blood of men, women and children."

"They came from a pirate craft, were taken by Basil the Buccaneer, and though they have given us a luxurious living, I cannot but feel the while that we could better earn our own riches."

"Do not be angry, mother; but I wish you to devote those jewels, in part at least, to a noble purpose."

"I believe I can find the island where we landed, where the pirate schooner Red Scorpion was wrecked."

"If so, I can get riches to devote to the building of a fine vessel-of-war."

"The treasure lies there now unused, and it cannot be restored to the unfortunate former owners."

"But I can give a part of it to the Govern-

ment as prize money, and pay for the building, arming and equipping of a splendid schooner, which I can command as a privateer in the coming war."

"I have the model of my sloop, and she can be built on the Kennebec, and armed and manned in Boston, for money will buy a splendid battery, and fit her out as well as any vessel afloat."

"If I donot win a name in her, then it will be my own fault."

"But you must help me, mother."

"How can I?"

"Give me some of your jewels to purchase a small craft and man her for a voyage to the island where the treasure is buried."

"If you wish it, I will return you the amount, from the treasure, which you advance to me in jewels."

"Then I will be able to pay for my vessel, which I shall commence the building of before I sail, and prepare for her arming and full equipment."

"Will you do this for me, my mother?"

"Gladly, my brave boy," was the eager answer.

"And, mother, I have another plot to carry out."

"What is it, my son?"

"I will tell you, and Kate, when I have seen once more Red Ralph Rogers."

"Why do you go to see him again?"

"That you shall know, mother, when I return, for I will now sail over in my skiff to have a talk with him."

"I fear trouble."

"Never fear, mother, but hope for the future, for within a couple of weeks I will be flying southward in search of the Treasure Island of the Bahamas."

"I will not be gone across the inlet long, but I must see Red Ralph," and going down to his skiff Clifford hoisted sail and went skimming over to the point of pines where stood the cabin of Red Ralph.

CHAPTER X.

BROUGHT TO TERMS.

RED RALPH ROGERS, alleged fisherman, in reality smuggler and ex-pirate, sat in front of his cozy cabin among the pines, when his eye fell upon the skiff running for a landing on his shore.

Behind his cabin was a pile of rugged rocks, and he half-rose, as though to seek a hiding-place, but saw that the youth had already discovered him from his hail:

"Ho, Red Ralph! don't run off, for I have business with you."

The man entered his cabin, and, slipping a pistol beneath his pea-jacket, lighted his pipe, and returned to his seat just as the young sailor landed and came with a quick, firm step toward the cabin.

"I went into the cabin to light my pipe, Master Clifford," he said as the youth drew near.

"And to arm yourself as well; but I come on a peaceful errand, Ralph, and one to your advantage in a pecuniary way, if you care to so have it."

"I am a poor man, sir, and always ready to turn an honest penny."

"Bah! an honest penny would melt in your hand, Ralph; but I do not wish to quarrel, but to talk."

"What is it you have to say?"

The young sailor sat down in front of the man and said quietly:

"I wish first to tell you how thoroughly I know you, for had I not known you to be one time a pirate officer upon Basil's schooner, I could have you dance a rope polka at the yard-arm as a smuggler—nay, don't turn pale; and, keep your hand out of your jacket, for I did not come here to be shot."

"Listen to me, for I have two propositions to make to you, and you can accept either you desire."

"What have you got to say?" moodily asked the man, chagrined at finding himself mastered, where he had always prided himself that he could master.

"Just this."

"You have some knowledge of the past that I wish to know, and for which I will pay you, for each confession, five hundred dollars, giving you one thousand in hand."

"If it is worth more I must have more, that is all."

"No, for if you tell me what I would know you get one thousand dollars, and if you do not, why then you shall—"

"What?"

"You shall hang for it, that is all, Red Ralph," coolly said the young sailor.

The pirate half started to his feet, his face livid, and again he put his hand toward his bosom, as though to draw his pistol and use it.

But Clifford Sweegan was unmoved and smilingly said:

"If you will take my advice, Red Ralph, you will accept the thousand dollars and live."

"When do I get the money?"

"When you have told me what I would know."

"All right, what is your question?"

"First, were you upon the schooner when Basil ran off with my mother from her home?"

"Yes, I was a foremast hand then?"

"Was there a priest on board?"

"Why do you ask?"

"This is a case for your choice, Red Ralph, between a thousand dollars and the gallows."

"What makes you think there was?"

"Well, I have often heard the men tell stories of how Basil once captured a Spanish padre, and the men confessed to him during the half-year he was on board, and gave him a part of the prize-money."

"One day they said he was to be put ashore, and a cruiser gave chase and a cannon-ball killed the priest, which caused the men to mutiny, fearing bad luck, and Basil got rid of nearly all of them by strategy."

"Is this true?"

"It is."

"Was the priest on board when Basil took my mother from her home?"

"Yes."

"Did one of the crew, in the priest's robes, marry them?"

"No."

"Who did?"

"Padre Ferron."

"The priest?"

"Yes."

"You are sure?"

"I am."

"How do you know?"

"An officer, the boatswain and two of the men were called into the cabin as witnesses, for the padre wanted four persons to witness the ceremony."

"And you were one of the men?"

"Yes."

"Did the priest give any certificate?"

"Yes, to your mother, and it was signed and sealed."

"You are right, for she has it, only she was told by Basil that the marriage was not legal, one of the men having performed the ceremony."

"It is false, for it was legal, and Basil had his own motive in wishing to deny it."

"So I suppose."

"Have I earned my money?"

"Yes, five hundred dollars; but now to the other queries?"

"I am ready."

"Was my mother long on board the schooner, after her marriage?"

"A few months."

"And then?"

"Your father took her to a home on the Cuban Coast, where he was wont to play sugar-planter."

"How long before she returned to the ship?"

"To remain?"

"Yes."

"About ten or twelve years, I guess, for your father gave up piracy for awhile and lived in Cuba, but took to it again when suspected."

"And you?"

"Oh, I knocked about the world, and meeting him in Cuba we again sailed together, I as an officer then."

"I see, and my mother went with him?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"No."

"Who went with her?"

"You and your sister."

"I see, and Basil made me a midshipman, young as I was?"

"Yes, and a good officer you made too."

"Thank you; but did the crew all believe that we were Basil's children, my sister and I?"

"I guess so."

"And you?"

"See here, Master Clifford, I see what you are after, and how you got a hint of it I don't know; but if you wish me to tell you the truth, if it is worth to you just one thousand more than you have promised me, that is, two thousand in all, say so, and I'll talk; but I'll die before I sell out for less."

"I could change your mind as to the dying, Red Ralph; but I will pay you your price."

"I was a fool not to say as much more."

"Yes, for now I will not pay one dollar over the two thousand, and I cannot well spare that at present."

"But did you believe my sister and myself were Basil's children?"

"I knew that you were not."

"How did you know it?"

"Well, there was not the shadow of a resemblance in either of you to him, and more, he told me how you had come ashore near his wife's home in Cuba, in a wreck, and she being childless, had at once adopted you."

"Was there no clew as to who we were?"

"I guess so; but if there was your mother has it."

"Thank you, and let me say that your words bring back from the past certain memories to me, and I always have felt that neither my sister or myself were Basil's children."

"I thank you, Red Ralph, and let me say that I will not betray you, and be careful not to be caught by the Government officers, for I wish you no harm, mate, I wish you to live."

"Here is your money, count it and see that it is all right."

The man counted over the roll of bank-notes like one accustomed to handling money, and said:

"Two thousand, yes, and thank you."

"I wish you luck, Master Clifford."

The young sailor bowed, turned sharply on his heel and retraced his way to his boat, his face showing that he was deeply moved by his visit to Red Ralph.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SAILOR'S VOW.

It was with considerable anxiety that both the sorceress and Kate watched the going of Clifford to visit Red Ralph, and awaited his return.

If Kate was wholly in her brother's secret she kept it to herself, and upon his return to the cliff simply gave him an inquiring look, while the sorceress said with some nervousness:

"Well, my son, what did you find out by your visit to that man?"

"Mother, let me tell you that ever since the night on the schooner, when Basil flung his cruel words at you, that the man who performed the ceremony that bound you to him, was a bogus priest, I have known it, and just how bitter it made you feel."

"He left you in a swoon and led his boarders on the brig where he was captured, and I resuscitated you, but said nothing of what I had overheard."

"But I remembered having listened to stories of the men about a priest who was on board the schooner, and who was killed by a cannon-shot, and so I wished to discover if Basil had told you the truth."

"My God! tell me that he lied to me!" cried the woman, now white with hope and dread.

"He did lie to you, for reasons of his own, for you are his wife to-day in law."

With a glad cry of joy the woman sprang forward, dropped upon her knees before the young sailor and buried her face in her hands, while she cried:

"God bless you, my son, shall be my ending prayer."

For some minutes not a word was said, and then Clifford broke the silence with the story of the priest's capture and enforced captivity, and that there were four witnesses.

He told how he had gotten the truth from Red Ralph, who had been a sailor witness, and the poor woman wept tears of joy.

At last Clifford resumed:

"Now, mother, that you wedded yourself to a pirate, whom you had believed all that was honorable and noble, and who tried to make you believe he had bound you to him by mock ties, I know imbibed your whole life most cruelly."

"It made you hate Basil with all the intensity of your heart, and that hatred seemed also to turn upon all others excepting Kate and I."

"You went to your old home to ask to be forgiven, and found it deserted, desolate, a curse upon it and yourself cast off."

"This, too, added to your bitterness."

"You saw there one night, Basil, hunting you down, and in dismay you fled."

"All these things together imbibed you the more, as did also the meeting with your old lover, Captain Chadwick, who had been in love with you from your girlhood, and but for your

romantic meeting with Basil, would have made you his wife."

"All this you told when ill some months ago, when delirious with fever; but Kate and I kept our secret, for I hoped to be able some day to raise the cruel burden you have from off your heart and brain."

"Now, mother, the past no longer need be a terror to you, for the future holds out hope of joy."

"You can live here with Kate, yes, but let me beg you to discard all idea of longer being a sorceress, and we will all be so happy one of these days, for I will win fame and fortune on the high seas, and let it atone for the pirate riches which we have lived on, for Heaven knows we could do nothing else, make no restoration of the crime-stained booty, and were compelled to subsist."

"To-morrow I shall sail in the sloop to start the building of my schooner in the Kennebec, and this done I will secure in Boston a suitable craft with a small crew to go after the pirate treasure on the isle of the Bahamas."

"It will pay for my vessel, and the balance I can turn over to the Government as prize money."

"There are in Boston two splendid young men whom I will make my first and second officers."

"You remember I took them off a sinking wreck some months ago, and they are dashing, daring young men who are most anxious to go into the war on board a privateer, for I saw them on my last run to Boston."

"You refer to Harvey and Clarence Lynn, brother?" quietly asked Kate.

"Yes, and but for you, my sweet sister, I would never alone have been able to take them off that wreck, and they spoke of you as their Beautiful Heroine when I saw them."

"Now, Harvey has served on his father's vessels, for Mr. Lynn is a large shipping merchant, and Clarence was a midshipman in the navy for four years, but left on account of a wound which was for a long time supposed to be fatal, though he is all right now, so they will both make good officers, and the run to the Bahamas will break them in for service on my privateer."

"Now, mother, you know my plans; but let me tell you one deep motive I have in view, and of which I hinted before going to see Red Ralph."

"And that motive I am anxious to learn, my son," said Mrs. Sweegan, who had already begun to feel like a different woman.

"Mother, I am determined to hunt down and hang Basil, the Buccaneer, whom men call my father," was the almost fierce rejoinder of the young sailor.

"Your father?" gasped the woman.

"It is false, mother! Basil is not my father, nor is he the father of Kate!"

"Thank God!" broke from the lips of Kate, while the woman sprang to her feet and said with great excitement:

"Boy! Man! What do you know of this?"

"Be calm, mother, for your oath to a pirate does not longer bind you to secrecy."

"I know just what I say to be true—that Basil the Buccaneer is not the father of Kate or myself. I have never believed it, since I have been old enough to think on the matter."

"I know, mother, that he forced you to say so; but Kate and I were taken from a wreck by you."

"The wreck came ashore on the Cuban Coast, on the beach near the plantation-house where Basil placed you. I was a little boy, then, of seven, and Kate a baby girl."

"You took us to your heart as your own children, and a dear, devoted mother you have been to us, and will be still, for we know no other parent than you."

"But Basil, that crime-stained man who sails the sea to-day under a black flag, who deceived you so cruelly, then intended deserting you, and is now tracking you down to kill you and get the treasure he knows you have hidden away, I shall run down upon sea or land, wherever I find him."

"I shall haunt him with my vessel wherever he may go. Afloat or ashore will I haunt him, and in the end he shall die at the yard-arm of my vessel for his many crimes."

"Mother, by the Heaven above, I swear it!" and the usually calm young sailor sprang to his feet and raised his hands above as though pleading with Heaven to register his vow.

CHAPTER XII.

OFF FOR THE TREASURE ISLE.

CLIFFORD SWEEGAN never cared for other help in the management of his sloop, than his sister Kate.

Reared upon a vessel's deck, she was a thorough sailor, and she could handle the little yacht, for it was really such, as skillfully as could its master.

The yacht had been built after a model which Clifford had himself cut out of a block of cedar, and she had proven herself a most thorough sea-boat, dry on deck in a gale, and as fleet as the wind.

Clifford knew well what her speed could be made under larger spars, but for safety he kept her under cruising canvas.

She was two-thirds cabin below deck, and a most comfortable home did the trio find her in a cruise.

But she was too small for a out at sea run, that was to be quickly made to the Bahamas, and so Clifford decided to charter a suitable vessel in Boston.

So Kate became his "crew" for the run to Boston, and she had been so anxious to go that her brother had laughingly told her that he believed she was anxious to see handsome Harvey Lynn, and the blush that overspread her face seemed to indicate that he was not far wrong.

The run to Boston was quickly made, with a fair wind, and dropping anchor just off the shipping house of Theodore Lynn & Co. Clifford hailed a shore boat and sent a note addressed to:

"HARVEY LYNN, Esquire."

In half an hour there stepped upon the deck of the sloop a young man whose handsome, frank, cheery face would make his fortune in any call of life.

He was about the medium height, well formed, scarcely out of his teens and in his blue eyes was a look full of fearlessness and his whole face bore the stamp of manhood.

He greeted Clifford Sweegan warmly, calling him "captain," and blushed to the roots of his golden hair when he grasped Kate's hand, a blush that was reflected in her own face.

"What lucky wind blew you into Boston Harbor, Captain Sweegan, and Miss Kate, my sister will come aboard and take you home as her guest," he said.

"No, thank you, Lynn, for we sail almost immediately, as the lucky wind that brought us here must hold until we reach the Kennebec, when I am going to order a schooner built with all dispatch, and second to no class afloat for speed and an armed craft."

"Ah, Captain Sweegan! do you mean it?"

"I do, most certainly, and if you are not already booked I would like to ship you for the war as her first officer."

The joy at this proposal shone in the young man's face, and he cried, eagerly:

"Gladly I accept, and don't you wish Clarence, too, for he is about to ship as mate of a craft they speak of putting out as a privateer, as soon as the war begins?"

"Yes, the berth of second officer is open to him, and more, I wish you both to go on a cruise with me to the Bahamas."

"The truth is, I am going there on a most important mission, and I desire a suitable vessel to charter, a good sailing schooner, with a picked crew of a dozen men."

"I will ask you to find me just such a craft, and crew, and have her ready to sail by the time I return from the Kennebec, where I am going to start the building of my war-schooner."

"Say, Captain Sweegan, that is a long cruise for you to take with only Miss Kate as mate and crew, so why cannot Clarence charter your schooner and get your crew, while I ship on your sloop here as foremast hand?"

"Will you go?"

"Gladly."

"Then pray see Clarence at once and have him come on board, and we will talk it over."

"If he is willing he can charter the schooner and get the men, but they must be men who live here with their families, for I am going on a somewhat dangerous mission to trust the secret to too many."

"When he has all ready, he can sail for M—, and I will run there direct in the sloop from the Kennebec."

"When do you wish to sail?"

"To-night."

"Good! I'll see Clarence and send him aboard and then get my traps and will be ready," and Harvey Lynn hastened ashore, and soon after Clarence came off in a shore boat.

He was younger than his brother by a couple of years, but had served as a midshipman in the navy and won distinction, while he had been severely wounded in an attack on a pirate stronghold on an island of the Caribbean Sea.

His face was very like his brother's, and with

two such young men as officers Clifford Sweegan could not but feel satisfied.

He heard Clifford's proposition with marked pleasure, and said:

"Just in time to prevent my going as mate on a schooner soon to sail, and which has just been built with the idea of making her a privateer as soon as the war opens, which must be soon."

"Now tell me, captain, just what kind of a craft you want for this trip to the Bahamas, and I'll find her for you and have her at M— by your return."

When told just what errand the schooner was going upon, Clarence said:

"I will be careful to get a craft which can out-foot all pursuers, and a crew that can be thoroughly trusted, for the temptation to mutiny and seize the treasure will be great."

"Yes, and there will be but me there to face them, and there must be no drawback in our getting to sea upon an armed deck, for there will be fame and fortune to win in this war, and England must again be taught a lesson by Americans— Ah, there comes your brother now," and a boat came alongside pretty well loaded with what Harvey called his "traps"; but then he had an idea that the cruise could be made more pleasant by filling the larder with certain delicacies and a few things to add to the comfort of Kate.

As Clarence Lynn left the sloop's deck, she swung clear of the anchor and started down the harbor, Kate at the helm and her mother and Harvey Lynn spreading the pretty craft with clouds of canvas.

Of the run to the Kennebec and back to M—, I need only say that it was made with dispatch, while the builders to whom Clifford Sweegan had been directed expressed themselves as more than delighted with the model of the young sailor, and, with a bonus in hand paid, had orders to spare no expense in making the cruiser all that she should be.

Upon their return to M— they found the schooner at anchor above the town, and were welcomed by Mrs. Sweegan, over whom a great change had come, for she no longer dressed in her weird costume, and her face seemed to have lost its wild, haggard look and to be regaining much of its former loveliness.

The coming of the strange schooner into port, and holding no communication with the shore, had excited the good people of M— greatly.

But, though it had anchored further up toward Overlook Cliff than vessels were wont to do, they did not connect it with the sorceress.

Purposely did Clifford sail by in the sloop without any sign of recognition to Clarence Lynn who was pacing the schooner's deck; but after nightfall he boarded her and carried the young officer up to the cabin, where a pleasant evening was passed, and the next morning the townspeople discovered that the pretty craft of Overlook Cliff was at her anchorage in the inlet, while the unknown vessel, which had been at anchor several days in port, had mysteriously departed in the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FORTUNE IN A NAME.

HARBORAGE HALL, the home of Commodore Caleb Carr, was the pride of the town of M—.

It was situated about the same distance below the town that Overlook Cliff Cottage was on the other side, and it had been built with an eye to a home of luxury.

The grounds sloped to the harbor shore upon one side, and there was a pier, with several sailboats anchored off of it, and upon the other were many acres of woodlands and cultivated fields.

Within these was comfort upon every hand. The commodore had been a gallant commander during the war of the Revolution, and had lost a leg in battle, so that he had a wooden leg to replace it.

He was a man of stern integrity, and was wrapped up in his only child, a beautiful maiden verging toward eighteen.

And no wonder, for she was loved by all who knew her, and a more lovely little maiden was not to be found in the State.

The commodore was a rich man, for his numerous prizes had brought him riches, and then, too, all had prospered under his management.

He was the sole guardian of his nephew, Kenton Carr, whose inheritance had been left wholly to the discretion of the commodore, as to when he would give it over to the heir.

In his keeping it had doubled, and though allowing the young man a liberal income, he had held on to the principal, for he well knew how

wild and extravagant Kenton Carr was, though he did not suspect him of being a reprobate and gambler as well.

In fact the commodore did not suspect one-fourth the truth about his nephew, who had been driven to herding with the smugglers to get gold to gamble away.

It was evening at Harborage Hall, and the old commodore sat in his easy-chair smoking, his dressing gown folded about him and his one foot in a slipper which his daughter had made for him.

A servant had just brought in the weekly mail, and the excitement produced by one letter which he was reading, caused his daughter, who sat near, to ask quickly:

"Is there any bad news, father?"

"Well, I should say not, my child, I should say not," and the commodore laughed.

Then he asked quickly:

"How would you like to change your name, my child?"

The maiden turned crimson, and a moment after her face paled.

She had suitors by the score, and yet she had not given her heart to any one, whatever might be her feelings upon the subject.

"Has some one done me the honor of asking me to bear their name, father?"

"Ah! that is good, very good, but it is not a proposal."

"What can it be then, father?"

"I will not keep you in suspense longer, poor, dear child, but tell you that I have here letters from the lawyer of one of my old girl sweet-hearts, when we were children together."

"A misunderstanding parted us, caused by the act of a rival, but she found out, after I went to sea, that I was not in the wrong."

"Poor girl, she never married, though she was an heiress and had many offers."

"Now, she says, in a letter which her lawyer has written at her dictation, that she cannot live but a few months at furthest, and that she desires you, my child, to be heiress to her fortune, which is large, only she makes the stipulation that from the receipt of this letter you bear her name, with mine—*Creola Kane Carr*."

"Oh, father!"

"Now, my child, this links poor Creola Kane's name with mine after her death, in you bearing it, and she leaves me the executor of her will and your law guardian."

"Now, my child, henceforth you are Creola Kane Carr, remember, and there is a fortune in your name."

The young girl arose, her eyes filled with tears, and she said, earnestly, as she bent over her father and kissed him:

"Poor, dear Miss Kane! it is her miniature that you have in your desk, and which mother was never jealous of, you said, for on its back is engraved the name, Creola."

"Your name now, Creola."

"Yes, father; but I have a fortune now, you have said, and so much riches will spoil me."

"Never fear, Creola, for you cannot be spoiled."

"A pretty compliment, father; but tell me if I cannot go and see the dear lady before she dies?"

"I would so like to do so."

"Just like you, Creola, to propose it, and you shall, for I shall take you there."

"She lives on the River Hudson, in New York, and we can drive there by easy stages in our own carriage, so when do you wish to go?"

"I will be ready, father, on—" she glanced from the window as she spoke, and muttered to herself:

"There comes the sloop, so they will be at home to-morrow," and aloud she said:

"Day after to-morrow, father, I will be ready."

"Then day after to-morrow we start, Creola; but now let me talk to you about this young man who is called in the village the Wizard Sailor."

Creola, as I must call her, started and blushed, for her eyes just then were upon the sloop of Clifford Sweegan, which was coming into the harbor, just returning from its run to the Kennebec.

"What about the Wizard Sailor, father?" she asked, quietly, but she kept her tell-tale face turned away.

"Why, I have racked my brain to find some way to reward him for saving your life, and that wild fellow Kenton's, and in vain."

"I dare not offer him money, so I think I shall write on to the Government and secure for him a commission in the navy, promising to build him a vessel and arm it at my own expense."

"Oh, father! that would indeed be a noble act upon your part," cried the delighted Creola. "It is but just, for he saved me also, for without you I could not last long."

"I will write at once and ask for his commission, and also pledge myself for a vessel, which I have secretly started the building of, intending to turn her into a privateer."

"And, father, I feel that he will cause you to be proud of him."

"I know it, my child, for that man is not an ordinary one, and I can readily forgive, for his, and his sweet sister's real worth, their fanciful dressing and the oddities of that remarkable woman whom they call a witch."

"The young man is well named a Wizard Sailor, for I never saw one who could handle a craft with the skill that he does, and he will make a splendid commander of men."

Creola's heart beat joyfully as she heard this praise of the man who had so nobly served her, and to whom her little heart had already been lost.

"May I tell him, father?"

"No, my child, for I wish to raise no hope that may not be realized, for the Government may refuse, though I do not think so."

"But if I am refused, why I shall send him to sea in command of the schooner as a privateer."

That night the letter was written by the commodore, and went off in the early mail from the town, and the next morning Creola Carr mounted her horse and rode over to Overlook Cliff to say farewell to her friends there, for as such she now regarded the recluse trio who dwelt there.

Her heart gave a throb of regret when Kate told her that Clifford had sailed the night before for a voyage to southern seas, and to be gone for an indefinite time, and after bidding the young girl and her mother good-by, she returned to Harborage Hall to prepare for her journey, leaving word that the Wizard Sailor must not go to sea again until he had seen the commodore.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BRACE OF VILLAINS.

SEVERAL days after the departure of the schooner, with the Wizard Sailor in command, to run for the Treasure Island, and the going of the commodore and his daughter to visit Miss Creola Kane, Red Ralph received a visitor.

He came on horseback with a rifle across his saddle, and a couple of dogs trotting at the heels of his horse.

"Ah, Captain Kenton, glad to see you—alight," said Red Ralph, as the horseman rode up.

The latter obeyed, and as the sailor placed a chair for him, he asked:

"Been hunting, I take it."

"No, for I am in no humor now for small game; but I came out under pretense of a hunt to see you, and have just had a long ten-mile ride of it."

"Yes, it's a long way round to head the Inlet; but any news?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"That fellow Sweegan has gone to sea in command of a schooner."

"How do you know?"

"Abe Halley, whom Sweegan once thrashed for insulting him, had his eye on that unknown schooner that was in port for a few days, and he saw the Wizard Sailor and two others leave Overlook and row out to her at night, and she at once spread sail and went seaward, and that fellow was the one who gave the orders to get under way."

"Where has he gone?"

"That you can guess at better than I."

"The schooner looked like a good one, and maybe he intends to arm her as a privateer."

"Maybe so, but there is no war yet, and may not be."

"Not yet, but it's sure, for England has done all she can to begin it; but I am glad he has gone."

"Why?"

"Well, I was a little afraid of him, as he is a dangerous man, as I have reason to know; but now that he is away we must strike for a fortune."

"How?"

"I'll tell you, and remember, Carr, if you betray me I will kill you."

"Don't be a fool."

"I am not one; but to my story."

"I am all patience."

"Then let me tell you that neither Clifford or Kate are that woman's children."

"The devil!"

"It is true; but she knows who they are, and is just keeping them to in the end get a big sum for their restoration, or it may be, for women are as uncertain as April weather, she may have learned to love them as her own and not intend to give them up."

"Well, where is there money in this?"

"The boy is away?"

"Yes."

"On an indefinite cruise?"

"I judge so."

"Then we must kidnap the girl."

"What for?"

"Don't be a blockhead—for gold of course."

"I see."

"We can hide her in the Sea Cavern, ten miles down the coast, with our booty-keeper and his wife to guard her."

"Then you will see the sorceress open up her money-bags and make an offer for her restoration that will surprise you."

"Good!"

"Of course it must all be looked upon as the work of smugglers, and you must let me rig you up in beard and long hair as a first-class looking pirate, and you do the kidnapping."

"But how?"

"Well, there is no danger from the lad, for he is away, and the sorceress goes down to the town every Saturday evening for provisions, and she runs there in her skiff."

"I'll be on the watch, and you can be in hiding in your boat, land at the cliff and pretend to have a message from the Wizard Sailor."

"That will put her off her guard, and you must be man enough to master her, gag and bind her, and as soon as it is dark, take her away in your boat."

"I will have already gone out into the offing in my smack, and will beat you, and we can run down to the cavern, leave her with Henshaw and his wife, and be back in our beds before morning."

"Do you see?"

"I do."

"Will you do it?"

"Why won't you do the kidnapping?"

"Simply because I am suspected of being a villain, and wish to run down to the town in my boat, get some stores and be seen there, and then to stand out for a night's fishing, you see."

"You would not be recognized, and no one would suspect you."

"The girl might."

"I will disguise you so she will not know you, and you must put wool in your mouth so as to change your voice."

"But to catch her."

"Easy enough, for you can have a cloak ready to throw over her and smother her cries, while you can easily tie her and gag her."

"You are used to this kind of work and understand it."

"If you don't wish to try the game say so, and I'll do it alone."

"And take the reward alone?"

"Certainly."

"We are partners and should share it."

"No risk, no share, friend Kenton."

"All right, I'll agree to do the work; but I am ruined if she recognizes me."

"Keep her from doing so, that is all; but where is your uncle?"

"Gone to New York."

"And your cousin?"

"Is with him, for he has gone on her account, as she has had another fortune left her."

"Marry her, then."

"I cannot; but some old flame of the commodore's left her a large fortune, on condition that she should bear her name, so she is my cousin Creola now."

"Well, she is lovely by whatever name you call her, and you are a fool if you don't marry her."

"She has refused me a dozen times."

"Marry her by force, then."

"And have the commodore shoot me—not I."

"Well, we must carry out our little plot to kidnap the beautiful Kate, so remember Saturday morning, I will run down to Cedar Point and you be there."

"You can hide in my boat and come here, and I'll soon have you rigged up, and give you a boat I picked up at sea two nights ago, and which is a sea skiff with sails, and does not belong in this port."

"When you have gone upon your mission, I will sail down to the town in my smack, and then head out in the offing to await your coming."

"Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"In the mean time I will row down to-morrow and notify Henshaw to be prepared for a lady guest, and carry him a lot of provisions, for we must not starve the little beauty."

"No, we must treat her well, or we may not get the reward you hope for; but I will ride homeward now, and try to screw my courage up to the point of kidnapping a girl," and mounting his horse, Kenton Carr rode slowly homeward, his dogs following close at the heels of his horse, and doubtless wondering why their master failed to go in the search for game.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KIDNAPPER.

MRS. SWEEGAN, with her market and grocery baskets upon her arm, went down to the little wharf beyond the cliff, and entering her skiff rowed toward the town.

It was about two hours before nightfall, and she concluded she would have just time to get back by dark.

Kate never cared to go to the town, always stunning a crowd of curious gazers at her, and so she remained in the cabin, reading a book, after her preparations were made for the evening's work later on.

Clouds were in the sky and the night threatened to be dark, perhaps rainy, yet it was pleasant then, and Kate enjoyed the sea breeze that fanned her cheek.

So engrossed was she in her book that she failed to see a small surf-skiff under sail run in alongside the cliff wharf and a man ascend the hill and come toward her.

He was a man of large build, rudely dressed in sailor garb, a pea-jacket with the collar turned up about his neck, around which he wore a silk kerchief as though suffering from a cold.

He had bushy, unkempt gray hair and beard and wore a pair of large iron-rimmed spectacles.

He was almost at Kate's side before she saw him and she slightly started, for visitors at Overlook cabin were rare.

"Be this the home of the Widder Sweegan, miss?" he asked in a hoarse voice, which further gave the idea that he had a cold.

"Yes, sir."

"Be you Miss Kate Sweegan?"

"I am, and may I ask your business here?"

"It's just to let you know, miss, that I bring a message from your brother."

"Ah! is he in trouble?"

"Oh no, miss, no more than that his schooner run afoul o' the brig I was mate on in a fog and were a leetle damaged, so—"

"Was any one hurt?" quickly asked Kate.

"No, miss, only the schooner, and she had to put in for repairs, and fearing you might learn of it, and be anxious, the capting asked me, when I come inter port to call up and say all was right with 'em."

"And it is very kind of you to do so, sir; but are you sure no one was injured?"

"Not a soul, miss."

"When was it?"

"Two nights ago off Montauk, miss."

"Again I thank you, sir, and may I ask you to sit down and await my mother's return?"

"Do you expect her soon, miss?"

"By sunset, sir, at furthest."

"I hardly see how I can wait, miss."

"Well, you must let me reward you for your pains."

"The capting did that, miss; but I'm a leetle hungry and if you'd git me a bite I'd be thankful."

"Certainly, and a glass of good wine with it, so come into the house."

She led the way and as she crossed the threshold, the man close behind her, she suddenly felt a hand pressed upon her mouth with rude force, and found her arms dragged behind her and made fast in a slip-knot.

"Keep quiet, girl, and you will not be harmed, but cry out and struggle, and your life is in danger," said the man hoarsely.

Kate soon felt that to struggle was vain, and so she became quiet, and the man at once bound her more securely, and placed a kerchief over her neck with a gag attached, to thrust into her mouth at need.

"I'll not bind your feet, but you must be made fast to my belt, for you look as though you could run like a deer."

"Try me," was the laconic answer, the girl's courage having returned to her.

Then she asked:

"Who are you?"

"A smuggler."

"You look it, and worse; but why have you made me a prisoner?"

"For ransom."

"Ah! and what do you intend to do with me?"

"I'll take you in my boat to a place where you will be safe until I make terms with the old lady."

"You can make terms with me as well."

"How do you mean?"

"What is your price?"

"You are a pretty girl and the price is high."

"Name it."

"I am not prepared to do so now."

"It is better so, for I would be foolish to attempt to pay you, as you would rob me and then carry me off as well for ransom."

"You are wise beyond your years."

"And a man with your gray hair should be ashamed of the work you are doing."

"I plead only my poverty."

"Release me now, go to your boat and come under the cliff, and I promise, yes, I pledge my honor that I will lower down to you with a rope the price of my ransom."

"I believe you are just the one to keep your word, girl; but I am not alone in this, and besides, the ransom we will get from the sorceress will be far larger than you can pay."

"Come, will you go with me now, for I must be on the water by sunset, or shall I carry you?"

"I will walk."

"I will have to gag you."

"I will not cry out."

"I can't trust you in that, for the danger is too great to me."

"Come."

She opened her mouth and the gag was thrust into it and the kerchief made fast around back of her head.

Then the man led her down the steep path to the wharf, and there helped her into his boat.

Forward it was covered over with canvas, and under this he placed her upon some blankets already put there to form a couch.

Dropping the canvas, which wholly concealed her, he shoved off and was soon under way, a fair breeze coming down the inlet.

As he neared the town he saw the skiff of the sorceress, the latter leisurely pulling for home, and out in the offing, seen indistinctly in the gathering gloom, was the fishing-smack of Red Ralph.

Thus far the kidnapping had been accomplished without a hitch, but as he passed near the sorceress the man seemed terribly nervous, for he had heard much of her wonderful powers, and his superstitious fears caused him to dread that she might discover the truth.

But the skiff went on its way, and the kidnapper, now that it was dark, stretched away for the open sea, and half an hour after ran alongside of the smack.

"Did you get her?" asked Red Ralph, whose red beard and hair had been blackened, and whose disguise was as good as that of his confederate in guilt.

"I did."

"Then she must be uncomfortable under there and with a gag in her mouth, so we will be as easy with her as possible," and springing into the skiff Red Ralph quickly relieved poor Kate of the gag, and placed her in the cabin of the smack, which he had also metamorphosed in various ways so that it would not be recognized.

"You'll be more comfortable now, miss, and we mean you no harm."

"Thank you, I am quite comfortable, and I do not fear you," was the plucky reply, and Kate sat down in the cabin of the little smack to await coming events.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN DREAD OF EVIL.

THE treasure cavern of the coast smugglers was some four leagues down the coast from the entrance to the harbor of M—.

It was a wild, barren spot, on a promontory which jutted out from the mainland, and it, too, was wild and desolate for miles in the rear of the rocky retreat and upon either side.

No vessel cared to pass near the point, and gave it a wide berth, even the small coasters avoiding a closer distance than a league away.

In rough weather the sea bounded against the point of rocks, hurling the spray high in the air, and hence it got the name of Dangerous Crossing about the neighborhood, and many tales were told of shipwrecks there.

But the smack of Red Ralph did not stand far out, but held close in shore, and upon reaching

the rocky cliff, ran boldly in until it seemed it must dash to pieces.

But just here was the safety of the little craft, for the point was a double one, one extending further than the other, and curving like a fish-hook, thus forming a channel-way, though a quarter of a mile off no such opening would be suspected though the cliff was examined with a glass.

So into this pass ran the smack, and then found a good anchorage under a shelf of rock.

A hail from Red Ralph brought an answer from above, and a light was visible.

Then the creaking of blocks was heard, and down upon the deck of the smack was lowered a large box, in which stood a man, and he had lowered himself from a davit forty feet above.

"Well, captain?" said the man, inquiringly.

"You got my letter left at the rock rendezvous, Henshaw?"

"Yes, captain, this evening."

"I have the girl here, and I blindfolded her half an hour ago, and she is also bound."

"You and your wife can take care of her for a few days?"

"We will do anything for gold, captain."

"I know that; but I have brought some provisions and you can make her comfortable, if you wish, and it is my wish that you do, but she must not be allowed to see out of the booty cavern or to get an idea where she is."

"I understand, captain."

"Now take her up in the box with you, and we will follow to see that she is all right."

The man gave a low whistle, and a voice from above said:

"All right."

Then Kate was placed in the box, Henshaw also got in, and a windlass on the rocks above began to take the two up into the air.

Again the box was lowered and the brace of villains were taken up.

They found a snug place up there, a cabin built of ships' wreckage, and a large cavern not far from it.

The place was the very spot for a smugglers' retreat, and Henshaw and his wife, a by no means ill-favored woman, seemed to be content in their desolate home.

One room of the cabin, reserved for booty, was given to Kate, and the door could be securely fastened from without.

Bales of smuggled goods were there, and a couch had been prepared for her in one corner, and she said that she could be very comfortable, and added:

"But please do not delay arranging for my release."

"See my mother, name to her what you deem my value, and she will pay it."

"Now can I be left alone, for I am tired and wish to go to sleep?"

"That girl's got more grit than a man," said Henshaw, and in this both Red Ralph and Kenton Carr agreed with him.

Soon after they took their leave, the little smack was rowed out of the basin until she caught the breeze, and then went gliding homeward.

"Now to get the ransom, Red Ralph."

"Yes, but we will have to keep quiet for a few days, for there will be a terrible row kicked up over the kidnapping."

"Doubtless, and then?"

"Why a letter must be left at night, pinned on the door of the cabin of the sorceress, telling her that her daughter was kidnapped for ransom, is unharmed, and if she will pay the price demanded, she must show a red and blue lantern on the cliff point."

"If she refuses to trade, she need show no light, and if she has any idea of treachery then her daughter will be killed."

"But if she will pay the sum and show the two lights, a boat will come near the inlet, return her signal, and she can come off, pay her money and get her child."

"Will she do it?"

"Yes, for what does she care for money?"

"And the amount of the ransom?"

"I will call it ten thousand dollars."

"Bah! it's a fortune."

"She has it."

"Will she pay it?"

"Yes."

"And half that sum is mine?"

"Not quite, for I promised Henshaw and his wife a thousand each, you remember."

"True, and our share is easily made, now the deed is done and the risk over."

Thus was the plan arranged, and the skiff which Kenton Carr had used was set adrift, to go off on the outgoing tide, and running into the harbor just before dawn, the smack landed

the younger villain below the town, he having already removed his disguise in the cabin of the little vessel.

Then Red Ralph stood on up to his home, and as he passed the cliff the sun was rising and he beheld the form of the sorceress standing there.

He was surprised to see no excitement, to see her calmly standing there, and dread clutched at his heart for fear that her professed supernatural powers might after all be real.

So he felt very uncomfortable as he went to his little home, and from the pine thicket watched the woman with his glass, as she at times stood upon the edge of the cliff and then paced to and fro.

"I don't half like her manner," he muttered as he closed his glass and turned away to cook his breakfast.

But all day long that form on the cliff haunted him, driving sleep from his eyes, and late in the afternoon he sprung into his skiff and ran down to the town to see what was known there of the kidnapping.

He went up to the cabin, as was his wont, had a few words with the landlord, and to his surprise not a word was said of the kidnapping of Kate Sweegan.

At last in desperation he asked:

"Heard any late news, landlord?"

"No more than what the papers tell us, that war is certain to break out."

"Yes, I guess so; but is there no news about the town?"

"I did hear that the young Wizard Sailor had gone off on a cruise as skipper of a large schooner, and folks do think he'll turn her into a privateer."

"What will his mother and sister do?"

"Oh they are all right, I guess."

"Have you seen them lately?"

"The sorceress was in town last evening, and she looked better than was her wont."

"They don't disturb you, I suppose, for you are the only one who lives up their way?"

"No, I give them a wide berth."

"Good-night, landlord," and feeling very uneasy Red Ralph went to Harborage Hall to make Kenton Carr wretched also, for misery loves company.

That worthy had just finished a late dinner, and in the absence of his uncle and cousin he had celebrated his achievement of the night before by getting very drunk.

But when he heard what Red Ralph had to tell he got sober very quickly, for he had been in bed most of the day and had not heard a word also of Kate's capture, and now it struck him as remarkably strange that the servants had not spoken of it.

"I tell you, Carr, we must look out for that woman, and I'll write the letter and place it on her door to-night."

"You are braver than I am, for I'd not go there."

"I must," and the letter was written, and sneaking up to the cabin, like a thief in the night, Red Ralph placed it on the door.

Within all was darkness, and he quickly hastened away.

The next day the sorceress stood on the cliff, and as night drew near Red Ralph grew nervous, more so than he dared to own.

But, there was no light shown upon the cliff, and this act of the mysterious woman nearly drove Red Ralph and Kenton Carr wild with fear, when the next day they talked the strange circumstance over.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MYSTERY UNSOLVABLE.

ANOTHER night and day passed, and not a soul in the town seemed to have heard of the kidnapping of pretty Kate.

This made the two kidnappers all the more anxious, and bitterly did Kenton Carr rue that he had been led to take a part in the scheme.

On the fifth day Red Ralph sailed down in his smack after dark, and went up to Harborage Hall to see his pal.

Kenton Carr was there, again the worse for heavy drinking; but Red Ralph quickly frightened him sober.

Then he said:

"Come, I have my disguises in the smack; this is just the wind for a rapid run to the cavern and back, and we will get the girl."

"Give her up?"

"I will run home with my smack, and we can go up to the cabin of the sorceress—"

"Do you take me for a fool?"

"You won't go?"

"Not I."

"Then you can land me and I will go, and you haul off within hail of the cliff and wait."

"What for?"

"I'll rouse the sorceress and tell her that her daughter is there in the boat, and you can then rouse the girl, and have her call to her mother to satisfy her."

"Well?"

"I will then tell the sorceress to get her ransom-money and come with me in the boat and meet you, and while the girl gets into her boat I will go with you."

"But can we escape?"

"Sure, for the woman will pull back to the shore, and in the darkness we can cross the harbor, land, sink our skiff and make our way around to my cabin; but you must tell the servants you are going to Boston for a few days."

"I understand; but if the woman refuses to pay ransom?"

"Then she can have the girl, for I wish to end this and get rid of her."

"And so do I," and having told the butler that he was going to take the night stage to Boston, and taking his hand carpet-bag as a blind, Kenton Carr went on with Red Ralph to the smack, which was soon flying out to sea before a stiff breeze.

The night was starlight, and the wind in their favor, so that the run was made to the smugglers' basin by ten o'clock.

The smack was anchored under the davit, and Red Ralph gave the signal hail.

But no answer came.

Again and again he hailed, but with the same result.

Then the smack was hauled in until her topmast touched the davit and up the mast he went and was soon upon the shelf of rock.

"Come up, here, quick!" he called out, and his tone caused the dignified young aristocrat to climb up the mast, step off upon the davit and walk to the shelf.

"By Heaven, Carr, see them!"

"A dead body?" gasped Kenton Carr.

"Yes, it is Henshaw, and he has been shot; but we will soon know more."

A ship's lantern was found and lighted, and it revealed the smuggler booty-keeper dead, a bullet wound in his forehead.

But neither his wife or Kate were to be found.

The rocks were strewn with booty, and it was very evident that some one had robbed the retreat, killed the man, carried off his wife and captive and then gotten away.

"But who?"

That question they asked each other over and over again, but could find no clew to solve the mystery.

There was but one way to leave the retreat, and that was down to the water by means of the davit and the box, so that no one could be in hiding there.

But they reached the cabin, rocks and cavern, and then felt sure that some one who knew the secret had betrayed it, and had come to plunder the retreat, and hence had rescued the captive.

But the keeper's wife, where was she?

That question also remained unanswered, and unable to do more the two now terribly frightened worthies returned to their boat and sailed homeward.

The smack dropped anchor just at dawn and they went ashore, for Kenton had accompanied Red Ralph to his cabin.

They had removed their disguises, and were only anxious to know what the day would bring to them.

After sunrise the sorceress was seen upon the cliff, and often during the day she went back and forth, between the point and the cabin.

In the afternoon Red Ralph went down alone to the town; but not a soul yet knew of Kate's having been kidnapped, or of her rescue.

That night Kenton Carr returned to Harborage Hall, and promised to ride around to see Red Ralph the next day but one, to see if aught had been discovered.

This he did, and he found the smuggler very blue, for not a word had he heard.

"I tell you, Red Ralph, this suspense is awful," said Kenton Carr.

"I'll tell you how we can end it."

"How?"

"I'll row you to a point up the inlet and you go to the cabin—"

"No."

"I say yes, for you say your uncle is to be home in a day or two, so go and carry a pretended message from your cousin to the girl."

"My cousin will know about it."

"Tell her you sorely wished to see the girl and beg pardon for your rudeness, so made that an excuse, that you had a message from her."

"And then?"

"You can then find out if the girl is really there, and see just what the sorceress has to say."

"It is better than suspense."

"Far better."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do."

"What?"

"I'll go to-morrow, if nothing turns up in the mean time."

"All right, and come through the town to see if you hear anything, and I'll row you across the inlet up there where she cannot see us."

"Very well, to-morrow," and the young kidnapper mounted his horse and rode homeward in a very unenviable frame of mind.

That night he did not sleep much, and the next morning called for his horse and started for the cabin of Red Ralph.

He rode through the town but heard nothing about Kate's capture or rescue, and so kept on.

Red Ralph had no news, so they entered the latter's skiff and rowed across the inlet to a point above the cliff.

"Brace up, man, for you are as white as a ghost," said Red Ralph.

Kenton Carr made no reply, and landing, walked slowly on toward the cabin on the cliff.

The sorceress was seated in her door, and as he advanced arose and faced him, gazing fixedly into his face, as though to read his soul.

Both he and Red Ralph had an idea that she had rescued Kate, or had others do so, but the first words of the woman undeceived him.

"Kenton Carr, where is my child?"

He was white-faced now, and stammered while he said with an effort:

"I have come with a message for Miss Kate from my cousin."

"Thy cousin is away, and thou hast come with a lie upon thy lips."

"Man, I read thy guilty soul!"

"Upon my honor, good woman, I know not where thy child is."

Then followed the words that opened this story, and before the curse of the sorceress Kenton Carr fled in terror, as the reader has seen, and regained his boat.

But both he and Red Ralph felt convinced that the sorceress had not been the one to rescue Kate, and that the woman held suspicion of them, but added to their fears and made them the more anxious to get out of harm's way on the deck of a good schooner which the commodore was to be persuaded to place his degenerate nephew in command of.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN INTERVIEW.

COMMODORE CARR and his beautiful daughter were once more at home.

They arrived at noon and found Kenton Carr ready to welcome them.

He hid his nervousness, and felt that from his sweet cousin Creola he must learn the truth about Kate's rescue, and where she was.

He recalled with regret that he had, in his visit to the sorceress, appeared to know that Kate was away, for he had shown no pretended surprise when told that he had taken her away.

But Creola would soon set it right, or at least relieve his surprise.

The first moment that he could do so, after her return, he asked her to accompany him for a walk in the flower garden, and when they were seated in an arbor he asked pleasantly:

"Did you enjoy your visit, sweet Cousin Creola, for so I must call you now?"

"Yes, I have taken the name of that good and noble woman, and she has left me her large fortune."

"It is large, then?"

"Yes, the family have been very rich for many generations."

"They are English, you know, and Miss Kane's brother was a baronet, and was called to England to claim the title and estates inherited by the death of his eldest brother."

"He lives there now, but Miss Kane said he was a thorough American in his views, having lived here since he was a little boy, and married here too."

"But he is broken in health and cannot last very long, she said, for the sorrow for the loss of his wife and children, who were lost at sea, has broken him down completely."

"And Miss Kane left you all her wealth—I congratulate you, Creola."

"Thank you; but I am rich enough without it, Cousin Kenton."

"And she died while you were there?"

"Yes, she rallied for a couple of days and

we had long talks together, and I hoped that she would get well; but suddenly she began to fail and went off rapidly."

"Well, you are in luck, that is certain; but now I have something to tell you."

"I was sure of that when you asked me to come here with you."

"Now, Creola, I am half in love with that little beauty, Kate Sweegan, and I wished to go to her and beg her to forgive my rudeness."

"So to get an excuse I went there to say I had heard from you, and that you would soon be home."

"The sorceress met me and at once accused me of kidnapping her daughter—"

"Oh, Kenton! has harm befallen that beautiful girl?"

"I only know what her mother said, that she had been kidnapped, and she drove me from her presence with a terrible curse upon me."

"It was terrible."

"Tell me of it, Kenton; tell me what has happened to poor Kate?"

"How can I tell you what I do not know."

"Don't be unreasonable, Creola, for I know nothing, and not a soul in the village is aware of any kidnapping."

"And Clifford—her brother?" and Kate blushed, a fact which the young man did not fail to observe.

"He is off on a cruise somewhere; but I think if you went to the cottage of Overlook you could find out just what has happened."

"I will go at once."

"No, wait until after dinner, for there is no need to fret much about it until we know if she has been really kidnapped or not."

"I fear something terrible has happened there, and after dinner I will drive over there—will you drive me?"

"I! Not for a fortune would I have that woman put another curse upon me."

"Very well, I will ride over on horseback."

"Now, Creola, I have something more to say to you."

"Well, Cousin Kenton?"

"I have determined to go to sea."

"Go to sea?"

"Yes, I am going to ask uncle to use a part of my inheritance in building, or buying for me, arming and equipping a schooner, which shall be an American privateer."

"I will command her, and besides serving my country I can also make a fortune, you see, with prize money."

"You have a fortune now, and I would rather put it to serve my country, if I were you."

"But it is the best thing you can do, and I will tell you, or rather give you a hint, that father has a vessel ready now, or nearly so, and wrote to see what he could do to get Clifford Sweegan made a naval officer, on condition that he would give him an armed craft to cruise in."

"He does this for that fellow?"

"Yes, he meant to do so, for you must not forget that I owe my life to Clifford Sweegan, as you do yours."

"Well, the Government would not commission him of course?"

"On the contrary, it was reported to my father that Clifford Sweegan, for gallant and most valuable services rendered to a vessel-of-war years ago, had been appointed by the President a midshipman in the United States Navy."

"The deuce!"

"I know it surprises you, Kenton, but it is true, and he was allowed to report for duty at will."

"Now father met his old friend, the Boston shipping merchant, Theodore Lynn."

"He was going home from New York in his carriage, and he rode with us all day yesterday, and he told father, who spoke of the Wizard Sailor to him, that his sons, Harvey and Clarence, owe their lives to the courage of Clifford Sweegan, who took them from a wreck at the risk of his own life, and his sister aided him in the rescue."

"He seems quite a life-saver," sneered Kenton.

"Yes, and Mr. Lynn said that his two sons had now gone with the Wizard Sailor, as officers of his vessel, in a fine schooner that was to be fitted out as a privateer, as he understood it."

"As a pirate, more likely," growled Kenton Carr.

"You forget that Clifford Sweegan already holds rank as a naval officer, and that those who are his officers are Harvey and Clarence Lynn?"

"Well, what is all this to me?"

"Simply, that as father does not have to offer the schooner to the Wizard Sailor, he might

allow you to take command, for the next news from England must be tidings of war."

"Ah! I see your plan now, Cousin Creola, and I thank you."

"I will make my proposition to the commodore to-night, and you back me up in it by suggesting that I be given the schooner intended for that fellow Sweegan."

"Not until you can refer to Mr. Sweegan in more respectful tones, sir."

"Ah! I beg pardon, I mean the Wizard Sailor, as the people call him simply because he handles his little pleasure boat well."

"Yes, I have seen him run out to sea in her with his sister only to help him, when large vessels dared not beat out, and you seem to have forgotten that on several nights of storm, when vessels struck on the sunken reef far out, that he has gone in his little pleasure boat, as you call it, to their rescue and saved many lives."

"I think, Kenton, that he has well won the title of the Wizard Midshipman, and you are the last man who should hate him, for your words against him always imply hatred."

"I am glad to see that you have a desire to serve your country, though I do not give all credit to patriotism in your case, and I shall urge father to give you the schooner, and will hope for your success."

"Now I must go in and prepare for dinner, and to-night we will talk over the privateer affair, for this afternoon I shall go to Overlook Cliff and learn the truth about poor Kate," and with a cold bow Creola Carr walked away, not even waiting for her cousin to escort her.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SORCERESS'S SUSPICION.

TRUE to her word, Creola Carr mounted her horse after dinner, and rode away to Overlook Cliff.

The commodore was enjoying his usual after-dinner nap, and Kenton saw her go with feelings of considerable dread.

Creola had asked her maid several questions about the trio at Overlook, but at once saw that she had heard nothing of Kate's alleged kidnapping.

Creola was a fine horsewoman, and sent her spirited roan along at a rapid pace, which soon brought her to the cabin of the sorceress.

There sat Mrs. Sweegan, and she gave a cry of joy at seeing the young girl.

"My dear Mrs. Sweegan, what has happened?" she said as she slipped from her saddle, threw the rein over a post and advanced toward the woman.

"My child! my child!" moaned the poor woman, now breaking down from her strong will to remain calm.

After a few minutes' burst of grief, in which Creola did not disturb her, knowing that it was best, she said:

"These are the first tears I have shed, and they have helped me, for I was nearly mad."

"Now tell me all, dear Mrs. Sweegan."

"My child has gone."

"So my cousin told me."

"Your cousin, Kenton Carr?"

"Yes."

"It seems hard to speak of one's kindred, but, my child, beware of that man, for he has a black heart."

"I know that Kenton is wild—"

"He is wicked."

"I am sorry to hear you say so; but he told me he had come here and that Kate had been kidnapped, and you accused him of taking her away."

"God forgive me if I wrong him; but I will tell you all, my child, and you can judge."

"Yes, tell me all; but what motive could Kenton have for kidnapping poor Kate?"

"He has a master, and gold is at the bottom of it."

"But Kenton is rich, very rich, Mrs. Sweegan."

"In name, yes; but he cannot get hold of his money, I learn, and as he is a fast man and gambles he needs gold, and Kate's ransom would come in well."

"I hope it is not so bad as that."

"You shall judge."

"Yes, I wish to know all; but first tell me why you have told no one of Kate's having been taken away from you."

"I suffer in silence and alone."

"My son is away on a voyage south, and I thought of making no outcry that I might be able to discover the perpetrators."

"It was Saturday a week ago, and I went down to the town to market, going in my skiff. On my way back I met a strange boat with a strange man in it, sailing toward the town."

"The boat I had observed Red Ralph have in tow one day, having evidently picked it up adrift; but I noticed that all forward it was covered with canvas."

"It was dark when I reached home, and I saw no light, and Kate came not to greet me."

"I hastily lighted a lamp and called."

"But she answered not, and I searched the house and found a piece of rope cut in twain and near it a handkerchief—here it is."

Kate looked at it quickly, and her face paled as she saw in one corner the well-known crest of her family with the letters K. C. beneath.

She had embroidered the handkerchief for her cousin.

"This was the only clew I had, and I at once knew that she had been taken away, but dreaded no harm coming to her if he had her, knowing it was done for money."

"So I gave no alarm and waited, but I watched as well."

"I saw a man come the next night and pin a letter upon the door."

"The man was Red Ralph."

"He had gone out in his smack the afternoon Kate was taken, and came back the next morning at dawn, and he watched me with his glass all day, for I saw without appearing to be watching."

"Here is the note he left, read it."

Creola did so, and said:

"The hand is evidently disguised."

"Yes! but I paid no attention to the letter, and then I saw your cousin visit Red Ralph, and he went on horseback and kept hidden among the pines."

"Three nights ago the smack went to sea, and she ran first to a point near your house and took some one on board, for I followed in my skiff."

"She came back before dawn, and two men landed at Red Ralph's cabin."

"Then came a visit from your cousin, and though he came up the path from the village, when I frightened him with my curse he fled straight back up the shore, sprung into Red Ralph's boat, for that man was waiting for him, and was rowed back across the inlet."

"This is remarkable."

"Yes, and when he came here his words betrayed a guilty conscience."

"Now I have kept quiet, and I intend to do so, for not a word will I utter, and I do not wish you to do so."

"But watch your cousin, and see what he does, where he goes, and all."

"I have no fear for Kate's safety, and so will not worry, only watch, and when Clifford comes home then she will be found, never fear."

"But this man, Red Ralph, what of him?"

"I knew him in the past, and he recognized us, and he knows that I am able to pay a big ransom for Kate's return, and the note proves that it was for that purpose she was taken."

"I will gladly pay a share of it, Mrs. Sweegan, if—"

"God bless your sweet soul, my child, I am amply able, and willing to pay it, but I do not intend to be robbed by those villains."

"Kate will not suffer, she is a brave girl, and I am sure understands the situation, while by watching the two men in their movements, we may be able to find out where she is in hiding and rescue her."

"Command me for all I can do; but I only wish that your son was here."

"Yes, but he is not, and will be away yet for some time."

"We must wait and watch, and I am sure that they have hidden her somewhere down the coast, for the smack goes in that direction."

"I will wait, and again I say, I have no fear for Kate."

"I am glad you take this hopeful view of it, for it cheers me up, and I only hope Kate will not suffer from anxiety."

"Not she, for she has a nerve of iron, and it was a smart game that kidnapper played on her, or he would not have caught her off her guard."

After a stay of half an hour longer Kate mounted her horse and rode slowly homeward, her thoughts very busy in planning and plotting.

Her cousin met her as she rode up, and she saw that his face was pale, his manner nervous.

"Did you see her?"

"Yes."

"She did not curse you?"

"On the contrary she blessed me, Kenton."

"And the girl?"

"Has been kidnapped and the sorceress has a suspicion of the kidnappers, and quietly bides her time; but if Kate is not returned to her soon, without ransom mind you, she will act, as

will also the Wizard Sailor who will not be long absent now."

"She suspects, you say?"

"Yes."

"She accused me."

"Well, she will act at the proper time," and Creola passed on to her room, leaving Kenton Carr in a condition of mind that was terrible.

CHAPTER XX.

JUST IN TIME.

"So you wish to go to sea as a privateersman, Kenton?" and Commodore Carr laid down his paper, in which he had just been reading that war had been declared between England and the United States of America, and regarded his nephew keenly.

"Yes, sir; you won a gallant name, and I hope to emulate your example."

"Well said, sir, well said; but you threw away a good chance once, for you would now have been well up in the navy; now you will have to accept rank as skipper of a privateer craft."

"I hope to win distinction, Uncle Caleb, that will regain me a place in the navy."

"Why, boy, you are improving; but tell me your wish?"

"I desire, sir, to have you fit out, with my money, a suitable craft for me, armed and equipped thoroughly, and I will secure my officers and men, and now, as you have just read that war has been declared, I will go to sea at once."

"And if you are successful?"

"I will gain fame and riches, sir."

"If unsuccessful, captured, in fact?"

"I must accept it as a misfortune of war."

"If killed?"

"Then, sir, I die in a good cause."

"Good! now about your fortune?"

"What about it, sir?" and the young profligate turned pale, for fear his uncle had heard that he had already mortgaged every dollar coming to him to a money-lender in Boston.

"Well, to whom does your property go, should you be killed?"

"To you, sir, of course."

"No, I am getting old; but I'll tell you what I'll do."

"Yes, sir."

"I will give you a vessel now ready for sea, almost, and ten thousand dollars to carry with you for contingent expenses until you begin to earn your way."

"I will give you the craft and she is a fine one too, armament and all, and ten thousand, and you can go when you please—"

"Oh, sir, I thank you!"

"In return for your willing to Creola, my child, your inheritance, in case of death, and to remain in my keeping."

"Y—es, y—es, sir," gasped Kenton, not knowing what to say.

"Why should Cousin Kenton leave his fortune to me, father?" asked Creola, and she added:

"Surely I do not wish it."

"My child, there is something in the will of Kenton's parents that calls for it, and which, when he copied the will some two years ago, he did not observe, as it is a codicil upon the following page."

"It says that in case I should marry and have an heir, for I was not married then, and Kenton Carr was to die, the estate was to go to my heir, or heirs, see?"

Creola was indifferent, to her good fortune, in case her cousin should die; but Kenton Carr turned livid.

He saw no codicil to the will, when he copied it for the benefit of the money-lender, and so he had mortgaged his estate under false pretenses, so receiving the money.

Should he die the money-lender could get nothing, and did the man know this he could send him to prison.

Now, in his desperation, he was only anxious to get away, and so said with a pretended cheerfulness:

"I am most happy to sign any contract in favor of my sweet cousin, or yourself, uncle."

"Well, the estate in my keeping has just doubled itself in value, though you have called on me rather heavily for funds."

"It was left at my discretion when to give it to you, and I have not thought you capable of managing a fortune, so have held on to it."

"But make a name for yourself in this war, and I will turn it all over to you gladly."

"To-morrow I will have Squire Cheney up here and we can fix up the papers, your will and all else, and you may start the next day for Boston to get your craft ready for sea."

Kenton Carr only hoped that he could get to sea the day after, for he was afraid of the sorceress, the money-lender and his uncle.

He believed that his cousin knew more than she had told him, of her visit to the sorceress, and soon after, bidding his uncle and Creola good-night he went to his room, and then slipping out quietly, went to the stable, saddled his horse and rode away for the cabin of Red Ralph.

Red Ralph was considerably startled when called up in the middle of the night, and discovering who his visitor was asked anxiously:

"What's gone wrong?"

"All has gone right, Red Ralph; but there is a chance that it may go wrong, and so I came to see you."

"What can I do?"

"Just this, go, as soon as you can pack up, to Boston in your smack, sell the craft and get to work shipping me a crew."

"A crew?"

"Yes, for my uncle has given me the schooner, armed and stored, and with ten thousand to begin with."

"Now we must get away from Boston at all odds within the week, if we go with all loose on deck, for that woman will give us trouble I am sure, and there are other matters I have reason to dread the discovery of."

"Once at sea and we will be safe, for I can, out of my prize money, pay back all money I borrowed from that money-lender shark, and thus keep the commodore my friend, and that we kidnapped the girl she herself cannot say, should she turn up."

"But the witch means us trouble, I am assured, and the Wizard Sailor will be back soon, may arrive at any time, so we have no time to lose."

"Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"And will go?"

"I'll be at sea when the dawn rises, for the wind is fair."

"I am glad you realize our danger, and as soon as the papers are drawn up to-morrow by old Squire Cheney, I'll follow by the night stage."

"How many men will you wish?"

"She carries four guns to a broadside and two pivots."

"A hundred men, then?"

"Yes, but we'll sail if we only have a dozen and hide in an inlet somewhere until we are ready."

"And under what flag?"

"The American, of course, for I go as a privateer, war having been declared."

"Good! now for salt water once more."

"I am a new man again; but your officers?"

"You'll be first, as I said, only shave off that horrible red beard, and the others we must pick up as best we can."

"But you'll not delay?"

"Not a moment; but where will I meet you in Boston?"

"At the Blue Anchor Inn."

"I'll put up there, too—good-by, for I must get ready."

They clasped hands warmly and Kenton Carr rode back to Harborage Hall and regained his room before dawn.

But he was up at breakfast, a rarity for him it was, too, breakfast with his uncle and cousin, and during the morning the squire came, the papers were drawn up and duly signed and witnessed, and just after nightfall Kenton Carr bade farewell to Harborage Hall and took the stage to Boston.

His last words were: "When I have won a name, Creola, and a fortune with my sword, you will, I hope, change your mind and become my wife?"

"Not if you become an admiral and a millionaire, Cousin Kenton," was the quick reply.

Two days after Creola was surprised by a visit from the sorceress, and her first words were:

"I am losing patience, my dear Miss Carr, and unless Kenton Carr restores my child to me, or tells me where she is to be found, I will have him arrested as a kidnapper, and Red Ralph as a pirate, and so tell him for me, that he may report it to his confederate in crime."

"My dear Mrs. Sweegan, my cousin has gone to sea as captain of a privateer, and did he know where Kate was, I am sure he would not have done this."

"Gone to sea as a privateer, has he?"

"Mark my words, Miss Carr, that this power in his hands is but the stepping-stone to piracy."

"But Red Ralph still remains," and the now

revengeful woman returned to her home, and entering her skiff, rowed over to the cabin of the ex-pirate.

Upon the door was a placard which read:

"I have gone to enter the service of my country."
"RALPH ROGERS."

CHAPTER XXI.

KATE'S PLOT.

It had been Kate Sweegan who had slyly dropped the handkerchief of Kenton Carr in the cabin, having gotten hold of it for that purpose, unseen by her abductor, for she had seen some embroidery upon it, when he held it over her mouth, and yet could not tell what the letters were.

She had quickly discovered, also, that her kidnapper was disguised, and when placed in the cabin of the smack she had taken observations about her of certain little details, which she could recall if the opportunity offered, for she half suspected that it was the craft belonging to Red Ralph.

Though blindfolded before the smack entered the basin, she took notice of all that went on, and when released in one room of the cabin, by the light of a ship's lantern she knew at once that she was in a den of smugglers.

But she complacently lay down to sleep, determined to take matters coolly and as they came.

The next morning she was visited by the wife of the smuggler, and Kate gazed at her with interest.

She saw a woman, sad-faced, refined-looking and by no means such a person as she expected to find there.

Her face was pale and wan, and she did not appear to be in good health.

She was dressed in a silk dress, well-made, and wore a silk turban upon her head, scarlet in color.

Her form was slender and graceful, and she said in a low, sweet voice:

"I hope you rested well last night, miss?"

"Ah, yes, nothing disturbed me after I got to sleep, and I have a good appetite for breakfast, which I see you have brought me."

"Yes, miss, and I am sorry not to allow you to go out of your room, but my husband says that you must not see where you are, and therefore I must keep you a close prisoner."

"I don't mind it much, for it is for ransom I have been abducted from home, and the price will soon be paid."

"You are cool about it, little one," said a voice without, and Henshaw stepped into the room.

He was a rough-looking man, with a cruel face, marked by dissipation, and yet there was a look about him of having once seen better days.

He was dressed as a sailor, and wore a belt and pistol in his belt.

"Why should I worry over what must be endured?" asked Kate.

"It is well you are a philosopher, for it helps you; but my wife there would whine and fret terribly if she was in your place; but then she has no spirit."

"Perhaps you have broken her spirit by your cruel treatment of her, for she does not look like one who should be bound to such as you."

"Oh, miss, don't speak so," cried the woman in alarm, while the man uttered a savage oath and said:

"See here, girl, you are my guest, so don't meddle in my family affairs."

"But there is one thing I wish to ask you?"

"Well?"

"Who are you?"

"Do you not know?"

"If I did I would not ask."

"Find out from your comrades in crime then."

"One thing more?"

"Yes."

"What price did they set on you?"

"I do not know."

"Well, they promised me a couple of thousand, and said it was a third share, and I believe they are deceiving me."

"I'll tell you what I'll do."

"What is it, miss?"

"You take me to my home and I'll pay you just double that sum."

"And put a noose about my neck with one hand while you give me the gold with the other."

"I pledge you my word, no."

"Girls' words don't go with me, for I am in too ticklish a position to trust to pledges."

"Well, wait and get your two thousand then," and Kate turned to the table and sat down to her breakfast.

She was surprised to find the coffee so good, and the biscuit, in fact the smuggler's wife had prepared her a tempting breakfast, and as the man left she said:

"I will have some nice fish for you for dinner, for he is going out now in his boat."

Kate heard the boat lowered from the davit, and when the man was out of earshot, she said:

"Pardon me, but are you that man's wife?"

"Yes."

"He is double your age?"

"Yes."

"And a smuggler?"

"He is the keeper of smuggled goods."

"It is the same; but you do not like this life?"

"Oh, no."

"Then why do you lead it?"

"Alas! I cannot help it."

"Why?"

"What can I, a poor woman do, here on this desolate rock, alone with a brute?"

"Ah! he is a brute then, as I thought."

"But tell me of yourself, for I like you, and I say right now you shall not stay here to live the life you do."

"Oh, miss, don't talk so," and the woman ran and looked out of the door positively frightened.

"Will you not tell me about yourself?"

"There is little to tell, more than that my brother and me were left to that man's guardianship, and he had control of our property."

"It was left so as to give him control up to my brother's reaching manhood; but my guardian, whom I stood in great awe of, forced me to secretly marry him, and one night when my poor brother was told what he had done there was a quarrel, shots were fired and one was wounded, the other killed."

"My brother fell dead, and I sunk into a swoon and went into high fever and delirium."

"When I recovered he, my guardian, told me that he had told how burglars had entered the house, killing my brother and wounding him, and I was compelled to tell the same story."

"Soon after, however, when he was on a spree, he said something that led people to suspect him of the murder, and so he fled, taking me with him."

"He had been a sailor and got a berth as captain of a trader, and he took me with him."

"On one voyage, over a game of cards he killed his mate, so when we reached port he went ashore to report, as he said, but again became a fugitive, and I with him."

"Well, it went from bad to worse until at last he brought me here, now three years ago, and at night when he is drunk he often beats me until I run off and hide."

"Poor woman! how I pity you, and more, I will help you."

"You will help me?"

"Why yes, for you can feel only hatred for the fiend who forced you to marry him, killed your brother, squandered your fortune as you hint that he did and row beats you and keeps you here."

"We will wait awhile, and then I shall act."

"You have a boat here?"

"Yes, a skiff, in which he is now fishing."

"He keeps it drawn up here on the davits, which swing around so as to leave it upon the rocks, and hide it, should any one come into the basin."

"Well, we can ask no more, and when he next gets drunk, just come and let me out."

"But we cannot go to sea in a boat?"

"Oh, yes, we can, for I am a good sailor, and you need have no fear."

"But when will I go? what will I do?" cried the unhappy woman.

"Oh, you will go with me, and never want for a friend!"

"Now, do as I tell you, please."

"I will," said the woman, who was controlled by the strong will of the brave girl.

"I must go now, for he must suspect nothing."

"No, and you must manage to get a pistol for me, as we may need it."

"I will, but you fairly frighten me," and the woman hastily left the cabin, while Kate coolly said to herself:

"I do not think mother will have a very large ransom to pay for me, and I am sure, once we get out of this place, it is but a few leagues back to M—, and we will tie that man while he is drunk and wait, if the weather is bad, that is all," and the brave girl began already to feel as though her daring plot to escape was more than half accomplished.

CHAPTER XXII.
PICKED UP.

HENSHAW, THE SMUGGLER, was on his good behavior for a couple of days; but a man of his intemperate habits could not keep a resolve, and so he got upon a spree one afternoon.

He began by singing, for he felt in a good humor, and then he began to swear.

Afterward he became quarrelsome, and began to abuse his wife, a pastime which ended in his preparing to beat her.

Was it the spirit which she had imbibed from Kate that made the crushed worm turn at last?

It seemed so, for as he started toward her, stick in hand, and a larger stick than he had ever used before, she suddenly cried:

"Henshaw, do not strike me, or I shall kill you."

He was, for a moment, astounded at the words, but then whipping his knife from his belt cried savagely:

"Whip you? Kill me? By Heaven I shall cut your ears off for those words and spoil your beauty for life."

"Back, I say, or I swear to keep my word!"

But he did not heed, as with a savage growl he rushed upon her.

Quickly she drew from beneath her apron the pistol she had secured for Kate, and, cocking it, pulled the trigger.

It was the first shot she had ever fired, but Fate guided her aim, and the bullet entered the forehead of the man, and he fell dead upon the cliff.

"My God! it is done!" she cried, and rushing to the door of Kate's room she opened it and cried:

"I have killed him, but God knows he brought it upon himself."

"Yes, I have heard all, and you are a brave woman, and *we are free*."

"Free! yes, free from him."

"Come, do not get blue, but let us leave here as soon as we can, for the sea is smooth, and some of the smugglers may return at any time."

"Let us have the place appear as though a rescue had been made, and the place robbed, for we can throw the goods into the sea."

"Come, rouse yourself, Mrs. Henshaw, and we will soon be away."

The woman rallied at once, and the smugglers would have died with rage had they seen their valuable stores go flying into the sea.

It was dark before they were ready to go, for the skiff had to be stored with provisions, water, and wraps, for Kate was not going unprepared, and arranged so that if they were a couple of days getting to port they would not suffer.

Then they decided to remain all night and start the next morning, and as the two sat on the rocks talking together, Mrs. Henshaw suddenly started to her feet crying:

"See that light! it is the smack, for she always shows a red light a league away, then a blue one—they are signals, for my husband should be on watch."

"Then we must go at once—come, let us lower ourselves in the boat."

They quickly took their places, and lowered the skiff into the basin, and casting off, Kate seized the oars and shot around the point of rocks when the smack was not half a mile away.

The tide was running out, and so they let themselves drift with it, saw the smack run into the basin, and they lay low in the boat not to attract the attention of the men when they reached the cliff.

Utterly worn out they both sunk to sleep and when they awoke several hours after they were out of sight of land, the sky was overcast and all was darkness above them.

Kate at once decided to set the little sail and head shoreward.

The sail was set, she took the tiller, but with not a star in sight, nothing to steer by, she could only guess at her course.

And so she held on, but no land came in sight, and at last the gray dawn appeared, the daylight followed, but the skies were dark with clouds and hid the sunrise and not a vestige of land was visible.

But Kate was hopeful, though she felt that she had been steering from the land, and so she shaped her course in the other direction.

The skiff was a life-boat, decked over forward and rigged with a stump-mast and leg-of-mutton sail, so that she had no fear for any ordinary weather and tried to cheer her companion.

But she had broken down at last, the tension on her nerves for long years had forced them to yield, and she was utterly prostrated. In vain did Kate try to cheer her, for the

woman seemed hardly conscious of her presence or where they were, and at last the flushed face and burning skin showed that she had fever.

Thus the day passed, and night came on with no land in sight.

The wind was gentle, the sea smooth, but the lowering clouds threatened a storm, and poor Kate was forced to feel that if a storm did come their doom would be sudden and certain.

But her brave spirit never quailed, and she still held on in the direction in which she believed the land lay, while at the same time she did all in her power to relieve the sufferings of her unfortunate companion.

Many times did this brave girl think that she saw land ahead, and utter a cry of joy, to have it prove but a false hope, a fancy of the brain.

The dawn came, and with it the wind and sea began to rise, and there was no sunshine, for the clouds grew deeper.

Mrs. Henshaw was ill, very ill, her face flushed with fever and she talked wildly at times.

Suddenly an impulse caused Kate to look astern, and a cry broke from her lips.

There, not half a mile away, coming right down toward the little boat, was a schooner, and that she was seen from on board she knew, for the bows were crowded with men.

Relief was at hand, life was aroused, yet what was the vessel?

Nearer it came and soon a loud hail rung out in English:

"Ho that boat!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Kate.

"I'll lay to and then come alongside."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The schooner swept by and Kate saw that it was an armed vessel, and as it swept up into the wind she ran alongside.

And none too soon, for the storm was coming now upon them.

"They are women, so be tender there, you lubbers, and bring them aboard and to my cabin," said a stern voice.

Kate was able to help herself, but asked the men to raise Mrs. Henshaw carefully, for she said:

"She is very ill, and I fear is going to die."

Then she walked aft by the side of a man in a gorgeous uniform, and following her came five seamen bearing Mrs. Henshaw.

"What nation does your vessel belong to, sir, for she carries no flag?" said the young girl.

"The captain will tell you, miss," was the answer, and he motioned to her to enter the cabin.

She did so, the men following with the poor invalid.

A tall man, with a very dark, stern face, but with courtly manners met her.

He was dressed in a magnificent uniform, wore his side-arms, and seemed wholly in keeping with the cabin, which was furnished with a luxury that one would not expect to find upon a vessel-of-war.

"Lady, you are welcome on board my vessel, and I am glad to have found you in time to save you from the storm. Your friend is ill, I see."

"Yes, sir, very ill, I fear; and may I ask if you have a surgeon on board?"

"Yes, and he shall see her at once, and you must feel perfectly at home in my cabin; but it strikes me we have met before—somewhere."

"Your face also seems familiar to me, sir, but I cannot recall where I have met you; perhaps never."

"May I ask your name, lady?"

"Kate Sweegan, sir."

"Ah! Kate Sweegan—the latter was my name before I changed it."

"We have met before, years ago," and the face of the man fairly startled Kate now.

"May I ask, sir, where?"

"Yes, my name was Bernard Sweegan, but I changed it to Basil the Buccaneer, and *you are my daughter*," came the startling response of the schooner's captain.

If Kate was startled by the answer of the outlaw, he was equally so by her cool response:

"Yes, I recall your face now, though I was not six years old when I saw it last; but *you are not my father, Captain Basil the Buccaneer*."

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOST AND WON.

THE schooner in which Clifford Sweegan set sail in search of the island where his mother and himself had hidden the treasure of the pirate schooner which had been wrecked there was a fleet craft of one hundred and forty tons burden.

In his search for a crew Clarence had done the best he could, but it had been impossible, just at

that time, to get men upon whom he could really rely, for all were on the lookout to go in vessels-of-war that would bring them prize-money in the struggle that was to come between England and America.

So the Wizard Sailor had decided to go with those he had rather than longer delay.

Several times on the run south, Clifford had been forced to be severe with several of the men, and consulting with Harvey and Clarence Lynn, who had proven themselves most efficient officers, he decided to try a little strategy, to see just what they meant to do, for he said:

"It will be better to make them show their real colors now, when we have no treasure on board, than after we have it, and perhaps, if they were to master us, they would get the benefit of it."

So one day he gave out that the object of the cruise was to bury upon an island a treasure which was on board, until they could return, arm and man their vessel, and again take it on the schooner where they would be able to protect it from a foe.

Just as the Wizard Sailor had suspected, this made an impression upon the men, and they were seen whispering together.

They had been under the impression that the treasure was to be found on an island, but to have it on board was to their great interest, and at once they determined to act.

That meant a mutiny, the killing of the officers, seizure of the schooner and dividing the booty.

But, they had no idea that they were suspected, and when they moved aft, that night, to attack the Wizard Sailor, who was standing near the man at the wheel, he met the attack by suddenly opening fire with a double-barrel pistol in each hand, and then seizing his cutlass rushed upon them, while officers Harvey and Clarence Lynn sprung to his aid from the ward-room and a desperate combat followed.

The men, taken wholly by surprise, lost five of their number before they could offer resistance.

Then the man at the wheel, who had remained true and had told of their plot, and the steward also, came to the aid of the three officers and the mutineers were driven forward and those that were left quickly cried for mercy.

This was granted and the four men who surrendered were put in irons, yet kept on deck, to be made to aid, two at a time, in the working of the schooner.

The next day, believing that he was in the locality of the treasure island, search was begun for it, but in vain.

Islands were sighted and neared, but they did not appear like the one the Wizard Sailor remembered as, when a boy, he had been there with his mother and sister and buried the treasure from the wrecked schooner of Basil.

So at last, in the crippled state of the schooner for want of men, he was compelled to lay his course for home.

Several days after there was sighted, just at dawn, five boats off the starboard bow a league away, and the schooner was at once headed for them.

As they drew nearer it was seen that they were men-of-war boats, filled with seamen, and the United States flag was in the stern of each.

A wild cheer went up from the rescued crews of the five boats, as the schooner lay to and ordered them alongside. The first man who stepped aboard was Captain Chester Chadwick, and the meeting between the two can be better imagined than described.

In a few words the gallant captain told how his brig had been in action with a British sloop-of-war, but he had managed to escape his powerful adversary during a storm, which was followed by night, but his vessel was so badly damaged that he could not keep her afloat, and the day before they had to take to their boats, wounded men and all.

Then he added:

"This is the second time you have saved me, my young friend. I have often wanted to meet you again, and recall that night in the lagoon when you led us upon the pirate camp."

The Wizard Sailor then told his story, and just why he was there on the schooner, and introduced his young officers, adding that he had a schooner then building which would soon be afloat as a privateer.

"Sail ho!" came from aloft, and, after a long look at the stranger, Captain Chadwick said:

"That is the schooner of Basil, the Buccaneer, and as we have not a single gun on board we will have to run for it, as he is a very dangerous foe."

"Captain Chadwick, as we have no guns on

board it will help me in a plot I have to capture Basil. I shall pretend to be a merchantman. Keep all your crew below but seven or eight men.

"When he comes alongside then we must make fast and carry him by boarding."

"My young friend, you are a remarkable man, and just consider myself, my officers and my men under your command."

"No, sir, I wish you to be captain."

"Not I, for I shall remain in the cabin, and have nothing to do with it."

Thus urged it was decided by Clifford to take the younger officers and the men of the captain's crew, while the latter and his senior officers would remain in the cabin and join in the combat if needed.

So the crew were sent below, and the schooner was put away in seeming flight, for the pirate was coming rapidly on in chase.

All through the night the chase lasted until just at dawn, under the hot fire of the buccaneer, the schooner hove to; the outlaw craft ran alongside, and the first man to spring on board was Basil, the buccaneer, cutlass in hand.

He was met by the Wizard Sailor, who crossed blades with him, and called out:

"Honest tars, on deck! Drive these pirate dogs into the sea!"

The shock of surprise for the moment almost paralyzed the pirates; then they sprung back upon their own deck, to try and cast off the grapnels, when they saw the numbers they had to fight.

But, the Americans followed, and a fearful combat ensued, until the pirates beheld their leader run through by the blade of the Wizard Sailor, and fall to the deck.

Then arose wild cries for quarter, but, ere the maddened tars heeded the cry, many more of the lawless band fell upon the decks of both vessels.

But, the Wizard Sailor had won the victory, and Basil the buccaneer was wounded and a prisoner.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

No words can portray the scene that followed the finding by Clifford Sweegan of his sister Kate on the pirate schooner, and he and Captain Chadwick listened to her story with amazement at her adventure, and joy at her having been so fortunately rescued from the power of the sea outlaw.

In the three weeks which Kate had been on board the pirate craft, Basil had treated her well, and Mrs. Henshaw had recovered and was almost herself once more.

Kate had told Basil all that she knew regarding herself and brother not being his children, and he made the demand to know where his wife was, but this she would not tell under promises of release or threats.

Then came the capture of the buccaneer, and, as he lay in the ward-room badly wounded, he sent for the Wizard Sailor, the surgeon of Captain Chadwick's vessel having told him that he not live.

"I shall cheat the yard-arm of its prey, boy, by dying, and as I am told by the surgeon I cannot live, let me do at least one good deed for that brave sister of yours and yourself."

"I wish to tell you that your father was an Englishman, once a naval officer, who married your mother, an American lady, and gave up the sea, settling in New York. A younger sister of his came out and joined him there, and she is now living on the Hudson above New York City."

"Her name is Creola Kane, or was, for she may have married."

"Your father's father was a baronet, and your father having three elder brothers never expected to become Sir Clifford Kane; but his brothers died without issue, and he was on his way to England to get his inheritance, when his vessel was dismasted in a tornado, and being blown South, was wrecked on the coast of Cuba."

"By a strange fatality you and your sister alone survived the wreck, your parents both being lost. My wife adopted you, and I was going to bring you up upon a pirate deck, then make known who you were and get paid to keep the secret; but she learned to love you, so has never told you your history, but she has a box of papers with all the proofs of what I say, and I have revenge on her now in telling you."

"Wherever the treasure is she took from my vessel, that box contains the proof of what I say."

"I have nothing further to say to you—go!"

Without a word Clifford Kane, his sister, Captain Chadwick and Harvey and Clarence Lynn left the pirate to his meditations, for he had said that he wished to have witnesses to his confession, and the Wizard Sailor had asked the others named to come in.

As Clifford insisted upon turning the pirate schooner, which was a splendid vessel, over to Captain Chadwick in place of his own, the latter yielded and went on board with his officers and crew, excepting a dozen men loaned to the Wizard Sailor to aid in working his craft back to port.

Then the two vessels set sail and in good time ran into Boston side by side and a report of the capture was made, and also the prisoners were sent ashore, excepting the buccaneer chief who was looked upon as dying so was allowed to remain on Clifford's schooner.

The next morning, however, it was found that the chief, though severely wounded, had been shamming, for he had been able in the night to master his guard, slip through the open port and swim ashore, or drown, it was not known which.

Then the schooner sailed for M—— and Mrs. Sweegan had both of her adopted children to welcome back, and to hear their separate stories.

She admitted the truth of what Basil had said, but the box of "proof" had been buried with the treasure on the island.

After a week at home, in which he saw Creola Carr daily, Clifford Kane, as I must now call him, left with Harvey and Clarence Lynn, to go after his schooner. That beautiful craft was soon afloat upon the seas and winning fame and fortune for her gallant young commander, who, when the war ended could match Creola Carr's riches by his own.

In due time they were married, and it was a double wedding, too, for Harvey Lynn and Kate Kane were wedded at the same time, and neither the brother or sister seemed to care for the kindred across the water whom they had never known, so happy were they in their American homes.

As for Mrs. Sweegan, she who had been known as the Sorceress of Overlook, she built her a stone mansion upon the cliff, in which she dwelt in quiet seclusion until her death. The mansion still stands there, deserted now, and known as the Haunted Manor of Overlook.

Kenton Carr, once afloat, seemed to have nothing more to dread, and, under the evil influence of Red Ralph, the Rover, went from bad to worse until, at the end of the war—and before, it was said—he turned his vessel into a buccaneer, but was one day run down at sea by a frigate, and was never heard of afterward.

At least so went the story of his and Red Ralph, the Rover's end.

The commodore of Harborage Hall lived to a green old age, and was wont to divide his time between his home, where Clifford and Creola lived, and the home that had once been Miss Creola Kane's, his old sweetheart, and which Harvey Lynn bought after his marriage with Kate, and where Clarence, who remained a bachelor, lived with his brother and his beautiful wife.

THE END.

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- 501 Boots, the Boy Fireman; or, Too Sharp for the Sharper.
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- 667 Bob and Sam, the Daisy Detectives.

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- 41 Lasso Jack, the Young Mustang.
- 58 The Border King; or, The Secret Foe.
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- 74 Hawk-eye Harry, the Young Trapper Ranger.
- 88 Rollo, the Boy Ranger.
- 134 Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Rifleman.
- 143 Scar-Face Saul, the Silent Hunter.
- 146 Silver Star, the Boy Knight.
- 153 Eagle Kit, the Boy Demon.
- 163 Little Texas, the Young Mustang.
- 178 Old Solitary, the Hermit Trapper.
- 182 Little Hurricane, the Boy Captain.
- 202 Prospect Pete; or, The Young Outlaw Hunter.
- 208 The Boy Hercules; or, The Prairie Tramps.
- 218 Tiger Tom, the Texas Terror.
- 224 Dashing Dick; or, Trapper Tom's Castle.
- 228 Little Wildfire, the Young Prairie Nomad.
- 238 The Parson Detective; or, The Little Ranger.
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- 260 Dare-Devil Dan, the Young Prairie Ranger.
- 272 Minkskin Mike, the Boy Sharpshooter.
- 290 Little Foxfire, the Boy Spy.
- 300 The Sky Demon; or, Rainbolt, the Ranger.
- 334 Whip-King Joe; or, Dick, the Boy Ranchero.
- 409 Hercules; or, Dick, the Boy Ranger.
- 417 Webfoot Mose, the Tramp Detective.
- 422 Baby Sam, the Boy Giant of the Yellowstone.
- 444 Little Buckskin, the Young Prairie Centaur.
- 457 Wingedfoot Fred; or, Old Polar Saul.
- 463 Tamarae Tom, the Big Trapper Boy.
- 475 Old Tom Rattler, the Red River Epidemic.
- 482 Stonewall Bob, the Boy Trojan.
- 562 Blundering Basil, the Hermit Boy Trapper.
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- 661 Old Kit Bandy's Deliverance.
- 670 Norway Nels, the Big Boy Mountaineer.

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- 139 Judge Lynch, Jr.; or, The Boy Vigilante.
- 155 Gold Trigger, the Sport; or, The Girl Avenger.
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- 188 Ned Temple, the Border Boy.
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- 207 Navajo Nick, the Boy Gold Hunter.
- 215 Captain Bullet; or, Little Tonknot's Crusade.
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- 255 Captain Apollo, the King-Pin of Bowie.
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- 279 Old Winch; or, The Buckskin Desperadoes.
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- 528 Fox and Falcon, the Bowery Shadows.
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